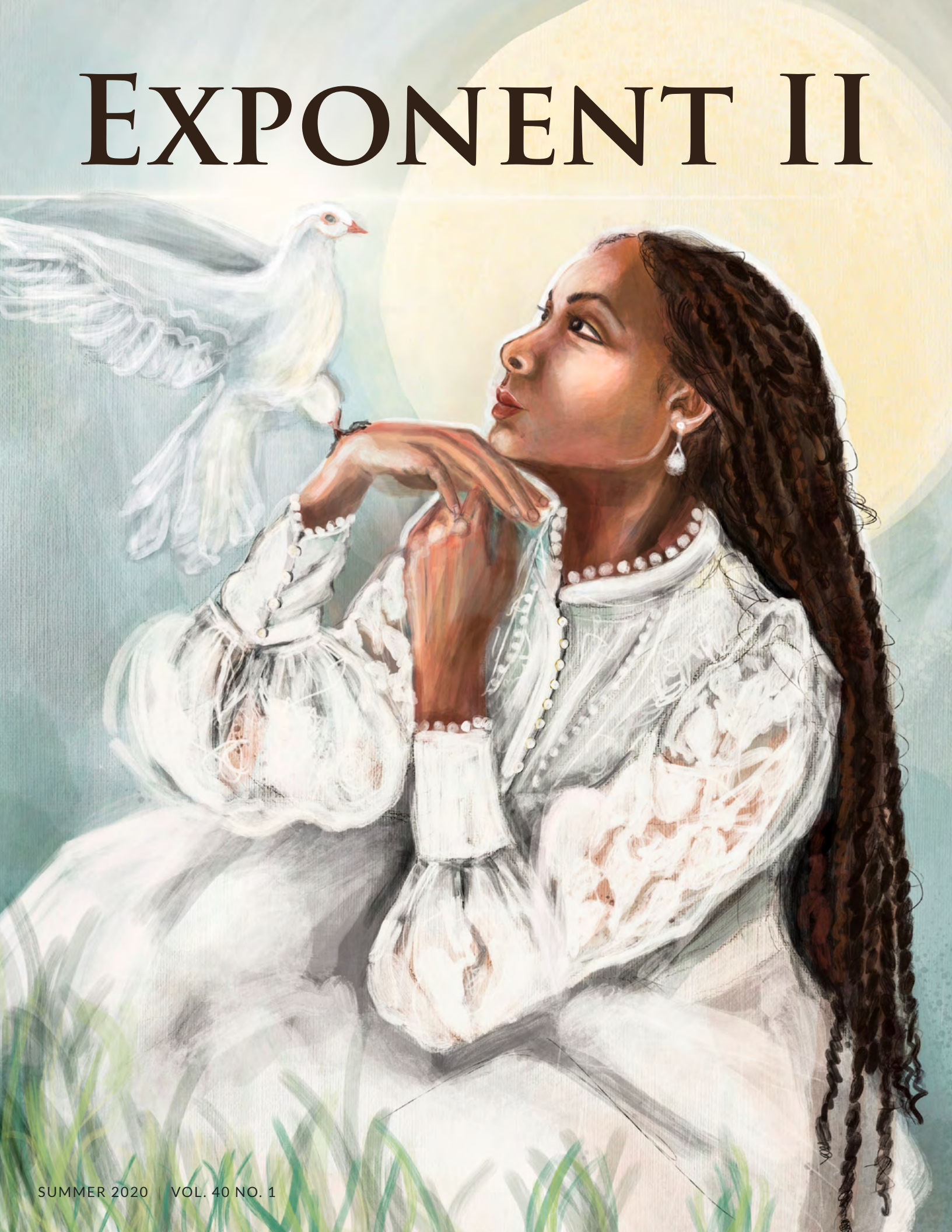
Exponent II



SUMMER 2020 | VOL. 40 NO. 1

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COVER ART

"THE COMFORTER"

CRYSTAL POWELL

This piece was inspired by John 16 to 18. I wanted to paint what I was feeling in the midst of this tumultuous time. From feeling isolated, rejected, and hated to being seen, heard, and comforted by God. I know God is with me and wanted a reminder of that. For those who are lonely or discouraged, God is with you. His Spirit is with you. For those who are feeling pain because others have targeted their hate and prejudice at you because of where you are from, what you look like, or how you speak, know that God is with you and He has sent the Comforter.

IG: @thisplaceofpeace

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ABOUT EXPONENT II

Exponent II provides a forum for Mormon women to share their life experiences in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. This exchange allows us to better understand each other and shape the direction of our lives. Our common bond is our connection to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and our commitment to women. We publish this magazine as a living history in celebration of the strength and diversity of women.

Fresh Courage Take

EMILY FISHER GRAY

We started planning this issue of Exponent II Magazine in the early months of 2020, intending to highlight and celebrate the long history of public engagement, service and activism among Mormon women going back to pioneer Utah. Then, just as we began to work through the features and articles, the COVID-19 virus hit, followed by the horrific and senseless deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd at the hands of police or white vigilantes.

Thrown out of my comfortable routines, faced with a global pandemic and the further unmasking of structural racism, I found myself frustrated and unexpectedly helpless. I wanted to act, to offer relief, to make things better, but the toolkit my Mormon spiritual ancestors left me did not seem to contain an adequate response to the challenges before me. I began to have doubts about the magazine's planned theme: would it seem quaint and irrelevant to celebrate suffrage rallies and Relief Society service projects in a world that feels suddenly, utterly changed?

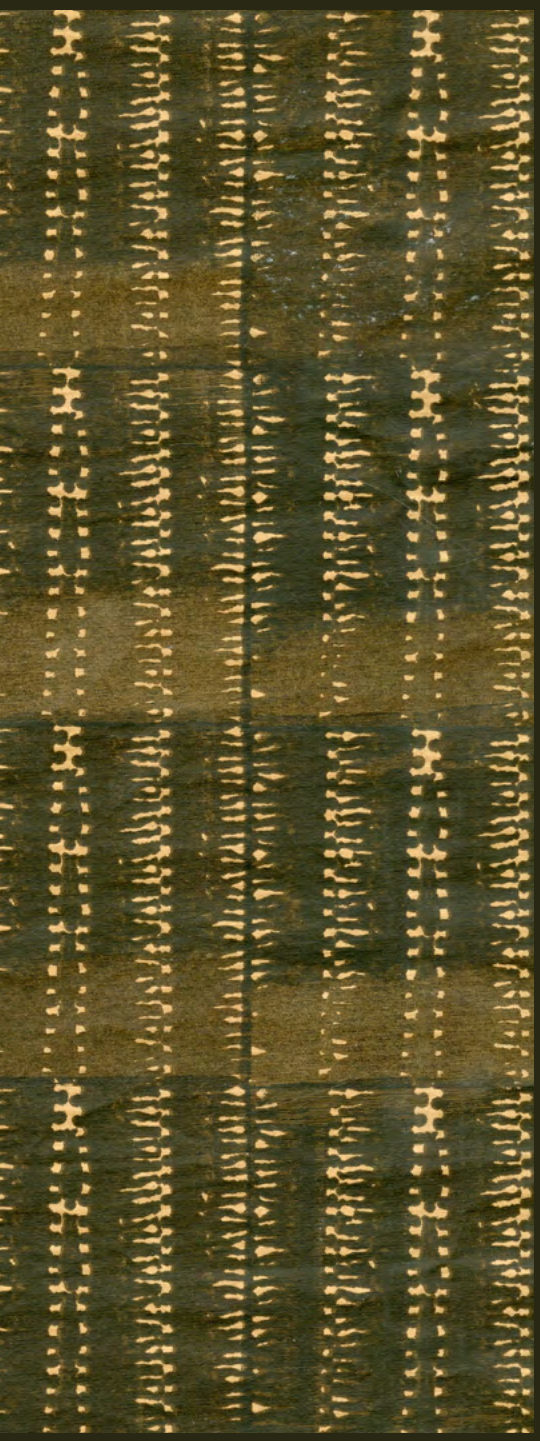
But this issue of Exponent II makes very clear that we are not being called to our foremothers' activism. BYU student Gretel Tam responds to a call to march in solidarity with her LGBTQ friends, despite her mother's concerns and the contrary messages of her upbringing in the church. Historian Andrea Radke-Moss reveals that Utah's suffrage movement succeeded because, paradoxically, it upheld the patriarchal structures modern-day Mormon feminists are actively questioning. Tam and Radke-Moss, along with artist Kalani Tonga and poet Dayna Patterson, take inspiration from their ancestors and spiritual foremothers while consciously going in a new direction.

Those that went before us may not have provided us with a specific roadmap for public engagement, but they had courage and confidence to try to create a more perfect world. If this is the legacy of social action they bequeathed us, it lives on in the brave Black women calling for change in our churches and communities so justice, safety, and spiritual fellowship may be enjoyed equally by all of God's children.

I take heart from the words of Kalani Tonga, who points out that "activism is really just a willingness to invest your time, resources, and privilege into bettering your community." This magazine issue offers several different paths we might follow in keeping up our Mormon tradition of active service and hard work for a good cause. Fara Anderson Sneddon shows how the church's Just Serve program creates a space for female leadership and service in keeping with the original Relief Society mission. Brita Brown Engh shares her experience serving as a mentor and "Big Sister" to a young, Muslim new American in Salt Lake City. Sarah Gusky Kemer's lovely sermon on consecration shows us how even simple acts of service can become sacred. Throughout this issue, art by Black, indigenous, and other women of color show us the beauty of the world around us and present a vision of a more just and equal world to come.

In the face of a massive public health crisis and powerful, heartbreaking pleas for social justice, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. I hope you will find inspiration in this issue of the magazine, as well as beauty and balm for your soul. Like the Magi in T.S. Eliot's poem and our Mormon pioneer foremothers, we must continue to move forward with courage, hope, and humility, seeking to find God and build Zion in the best ways we know how.

Black Liberation in the Voices of Black LDS Women



Most of my experiences of racism have been from members of the [LDS] Church. When I have expressed my pain and concerns, I am often gaslighted by members of my faith. Though the gospel supports inclusivity, the culture of the Church and often members do not act in unison with these teachings. The painful history of racism of the Church has affected so many people and still does today, whether they are members or not. I do not believe anyone should have to endure racism within the walls where they worship. It is often hard to grow spiritually in such environments. I hope that the Church develops action plans to support their stance on anti-racism."

Midwife-in-training **CHERYL NEUFVILLE-ETIANG** wrote this as part of a public Facebook post dated June 10, 2020, shared with the hashtags #blacklivesmatter and #blacklivesmattertochrist. The current wave of Black Lives Matter protests in the United States and around the world is in response to the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police on May 25, 2020. The Black Lives Matter movement seeks to counter racial injustice and especially police brutality. The Black Lives Matter to Christ hashtag and Facebook page seek to create racial justice in the LDS Church. The page was created on June 8 of this year, a date that marks the anniversary of the lifting of the priesthood and temple ban in the LDS Church. On a public Facebook post dated June 9, **AYANDA J. ZONDI WHITING** called for people to honor the anniversary by writing letters to LDS Church headquarters asking for church curricular materials to include a section on anti-racism and resources for education in this area. The organizers of this page live streamed a Juneteenth Fireside on June 19, where Black Mormons shared their experiences and faith to create healing for other Black Mormons. In a little more than one week, the fireside had been viewed about 14,000 times.

Since then a number of people have noted the inadequacy of the LDS Church's response to this racially charged moment. In social media posts dated June 1, 2020, President Russell M. Nelson called readers to repent of their racism without acknowledging the church's own racism and the harms that it has created. In a June 8 *Salt Lake Tribune* article by Peggy Fletcher Stake and David Noyce, an NAACP spokesperson criticized the LDS Church for creating a partnership with the organization to stand against racism and then showing "no willingness... to do anything material."

Doctoral student **JANAN GRAHAM-RUSSELL** tweeted on June 8 that "June 8th is a weird day for me. It's marked as a day to celebrate/commemorate the lifting of priesthood/temple restrictions and at the same time, I often ask what it is that I'm celebrating. While it marks an important moment for black LDS and the LDS Church, there's a lot there. I'm glad to see that the NAACP made those remarks because you can't teach something like that for over 100 years and expect that loving each other will solve the issues that exist. And for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to continue on centering the narrative that it wasn't complicit, that it didn't align itself with racist beliefs for decades undermines its messages about racism and prejudice and its partnership with the NAACP... But the days of pretending like/not acknowledging that the priesthood/temple

restrictions weren't a result of racism need to be done. But acknowledging that puts a community that relies on prophetic authority in a really weird place. So here we are."

Some Black Mormon women locate their experiences with racism in the life and death of Jesus Christ, drawing on the hermeneutics of Black liberation theology. **MELODIE JACKSON** spoke of this to Sydnee Gonzalez at *The Daily Universe*, the BYU student newspaper. In an article dated June 23, she said, "If you study Black liberation in America, you will find that a lot of it is rooted in Christ, it's rooted in Christianity. My activism is rooted in my Savior — a man of color who was lynched with his hands up." During the Juneteenth fireside, writer **ALIXA BROBBEY** shared her poem "Bittersweet" that also connects to the idea that Christ is with Black Mormons in their racial struggles. Black Lives Matter to Christ Facebook page shared the text in a post dated June 19 and Brobbey gave permission to reprint it in *Exponent II* (see page 7).

Lawyer and activist **BRYNDIS ROBERTS** shared the following in a talk at the Black LDS Legacy conference in 2018 and archived on their Facebook page, which builds on the idea that God is with Black people and can hold a Black identity. "When you go to the Atlanta temple, you see things that I've not seen in other temples. You see black women up serving in the endowment session. But more importantly, there are occasions when you cross through the veil and you are brought through the veil by a Black Lord. I cannot express to you, my brothers and sisters, the feeling that it gives you when you cross through the veil and there is a black brother standing back there. It may sound like a little thing to some of you, but I challenge you to come down Atlanta, go through the Atlanta temple, go through the veil, and experience that for yourself and see if it doesn't resonate with you powerfully and beautifully."

Artist **MELISSA KAMBA BOGGS** embraces liberation in her painting by depicting scriptural and divine figures as people of color. "One of the ambitions I have is to promote and normalize equal representation, showing those whose stories are pushed to the margins of our society," she said at the Juneteenth Fireside. "Art has so much power. It has the power to make you feel God's love for you by just looking at a painting. But unfortunately it can do the opposite if there is a lack of representation."

Artist **K DAWN** notes that "One of the major issues in LDS culture is that white members often fail to recognize that the roots of the Church are rooted in European Christianity. European Christianity is the same tradition that justified Columbus decimating indigenous people, the same tradition that fueled the conquistadors, and the same one that rationalized going to Africa and enslaving millions. In each of those cases the driving force behind them was racism: the idea that "other" people were inferior and needed to be convinced of the "errors" of their cultures and traditions. The Church came from that culture, that tradition, and by failing to acknowledge that the Church has those same roots, they are willingly ignoring the generational trauma of millions of our Heavenly Parents' children."

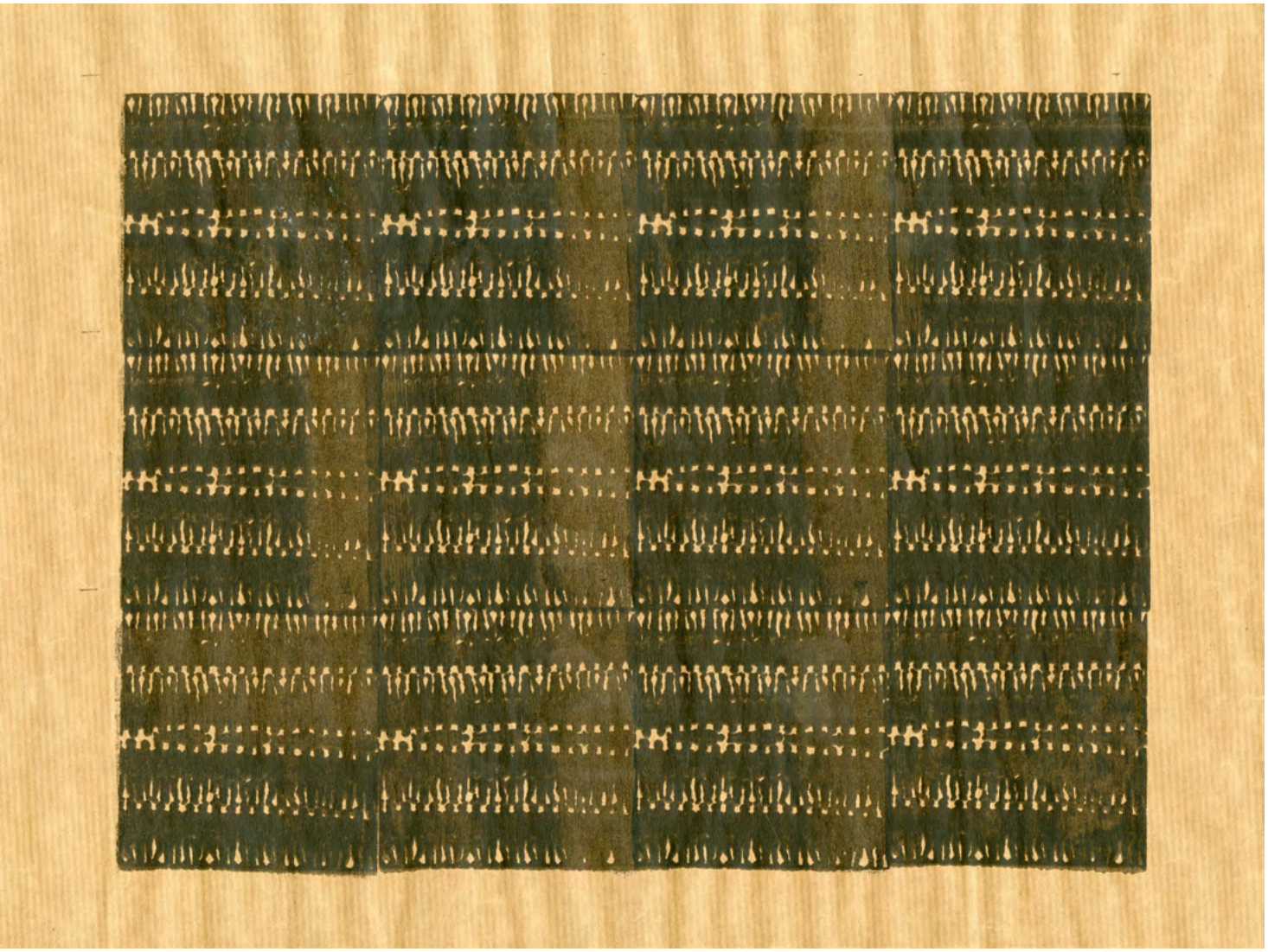
Reverend Doctor **FATIMAH SALLEH**, in a podcast discussion with Gina Colvin published on June 18, talked about the Church's racism in relation to Black liberation theology. "James Cone, a liberation theologian, said that white Christians are willfully blind. And it is as if [white LDS people] want to say that 'because we did [the lifting of the priesthood and temple ban in] 1978...' The failure to reckon with that in ways that are deeply embedded in repentance is why racism will continue to manifest itself... It is something deeply embedded in us that needs to be taken out. The LDS Church has not reconciled itself to what harm that policy did over all those years from the start of the church to 1978 and all the language and narrative around why Blacks couldn't get the priesthood. And that permeated the pews and the pulpits, that whole narrative, which they have not addressed. They think that by sending out a proclamation that that will all just disappear into the atmosphere - poof! 'Now we are not racist.' No, no, my friends, that is white supremacy in its real form. Hey, we made a statement. It's all good now." (A Thoughtful Faith, episode 337).

In an Exponent Blog post dated April 13, 2020, student and writer **MELISSA-MALCOLM KING** saw hope for liberation in addressing these problems: "It is my hope that we do not look forward to normal ever again, but instead an exceptional version of the life we are currently living. Let us continue to quarantine our minds with peace and compassion. Let us continue to go beyond mending broken fences, building bridges, and longer tables. Let us mend our thinking, open our hearts and recommit ourselves to becoming our best self."

Student **DUMDI BARIBE WALLENTINE** expressed her hope in terms of her faith in an Exponent Blog post dated June 2, 2020. "At the crossroads of being Black and LDS is an imperfect woman that has a deep-rooted belief in God and His Son Jesus Christ and His Gospel. A human being. A daughter of God who wants to be able to walk in a world that preaches everyone to be a child of God and wholeheartedly means it. Because if I am a child of God, like it is preached in the LDS faith, then that means my life matters, too."

Psychologist **MICA MCGRIGGS** wrote "I used to believe that the Church needed to reconcile with its' historical racism so it would be safer for Black people, but the reason the Church and white members need to enter a process of truth and reconciliation is because racism stunts growth. Their internal and structural work is not for me or other Black members; we will continue to have a presence in the pews as we always have. The work of examining, interrogating, repenting, and rebuilding is to liberate both the theology and spiritual development of white members. White Mormons cannot actualize their spiritual potential nor can they fully embody eternal progression until they process their internalized whitesuperiority. The Church cannot become Zion, as in Christ cannot dwell in the uncleanliness of whitesupremacy, until the Church utilizes the Atonement to repent. I call on you, body of Christ, to transform your guilt into godly sorrow, confess with your mouth, forsake whitesupremacy, make restitution, and continue to be accountable,not to Black folks but to the doctrine of Christ."

Special thanks to Nancy Ross and Page Turner for their work in compiling these words.



ARTIST STATEMENT

Many are unaware of how African people (my ancestors) were transported in the slave ships. Fathers, mothers, children. People, chained laying side by side, laying in their own waste for days.

Many didn't make it.

I didn't learn the raw unmodified details about this until I was in college. This shook me to my core, that they were literally seen as cargo. I can't help but feel that some of these ideologies are still alive. History tends to repeat itself, disguised in a different form when lessons are not learned. And from a distance, it appears to be a motif or a decoration, a pattern.

Previous page: Detail from "*Pattern*" | Above: "*Pattern*"
Marlena Wilding | IG: @marlenamaries | marlenawilding.com

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Bittersweet

ALIXA BROBBEY

They say that heaven is a pure white fruit,
And I must pass through darkness to get there.
Some days what they mean is that I must pass
through life in this dark body before inheriting one of theirs.

I think I tasted heaven once, but it wasn't entirely sweet.
First, I walked a lonely path, on my head a crown of curly thorns.
Someone handed me a map to guide me there,
But the iron burned me and called me cursed.

When I dreamt of arriving at the pearly gate, I was reminded that
It had been locked for my mother and my mother's mother.
That the doormen had spent so much time examining the rivers
Of our chocolate skin for filthiness,
They didn't stop to realize their own misty views were what was slowly corrupting the path.

I think I tasted heaven once, but there were traces of bitterness.
Echoes of "fence sitter" haunting the pages of beloved books and
Ghosts of chains clanking between bronze statues and admin buildings.
On the worst days, I tiptoed into my father's house and was met with nervous stares.
Instead of equalizing, these white clothes burnt my skin, bleach-like,
an acid reminder that this structure was not built to be my home. And I asked myself,
Was I wasting mornings ruining my perm for women who may never have accepted me as a friend, only a servant?

I think I tasted heaven once, but I choked on the fruit.
Rashes broke out on my brown skin as the allergens taunted their way through my veins.
I think I tasted heaven once, but I choked on the fruit.
Choked on the thought that if they found my body strung up on life's tree one morning, many of my brothers and sisters would stay silent.
Might say I brought this upon myself. Might tell me I should have been more meek. Might call my mother blessed for having something to mourn.
I've been told these shoulders will never be laden with more than they can bear, but some days I struggle to believe it.

On those days, like Christ, I withdraw myself from busy cities to glimpse paradise.
I ascend into mountainous corners of this world in pursuit of my own fruit.
I taste it in the most destitute of wildernesses.

I am realizing there are fruits on this tree that others have not tasted.
Ripe mangoes and sweet plantains tucked behind the bland pears. This chameleon tree reflects what God's children need it to.
I am beginning to teach myself that heaven is not confined to primary music or Harry Anderson's imagination.
I am envisioning gospel songs accompanied by djembe beats and black laughter.
I'm learning that in addition to a glimpse in Denmark, heaven is also my brown brother being whipped and lynched for me.

I taste his love when I march and shout and kneel.
Then there are no ghosts, or shifting tiles on the path beneath my feet.
Just trust in him who understands me fully.
Because he was despised. Rejected. A man of sorrows. Acquainted with grief.
Who wept. But still rose. And rose.
And when I remember that, there is no bitter with the sweet.
Just wholeness and healing and love.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I know a woman who is sunshine personified. She actively shapes the world around her with resilience and tenderness, only leaving kindness in her wake. I've seen her fill abandoned spaces and lift consuming burdens — some of which were mine. At a time of great despair, she counseled me that "Growth comes in darkness, as you're reaching for the light."
I thank God for that Sunshine Woman.

Above: "She is a Force to be Reckoned With" | Ginger Dall Egbert | gingerdallegbert.com | IG: ginger.dall.egbert

My First Protest

GRETEL TAM

Until this spring, I had never been to a protest. My mother said she regretted joining the only protest she ever participated in- the 1989 protest against the Tiananmen Square Massacre in Hong Kong. She was turning 25.

I am 25.

She said she was too naive then, too wrapped up in her feelings and manipulated by the voices around her. She said that protesting is not what good citizens or good members of the Church do. She would recite the 12th Article of Faith perfectly in Cantonese: *"We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law."* She believes that even dictators have visions commoners can't grasp. That sometimes there are things that need to be sacrificed for the greater good. That greater good is peace, stability, and unity: things that in the long run make more sense, that adults understand better than children and young minds. These are things which, when I'm her age with half of her experience, I will agree with.

My mother has always exemplified great faith, a kind of faith that I knew, even as a child, I might never acquire. I always identified more with Laman and Lemuel or the saints who didn't march across the plains to Utah. My mother never mentioned those saints, but they exist to me because that's the place I see myself in the story. I inserted them in the picture forcefully. But it was clear to me that my mother would be the first to join the trek, she would be the Nephi in Lehi's family, joyfully and obediently doing whatever the prophets asked the moment it was asked. I would not: I ask too many questions.

The first time I heard her talk about the 1989 protest it was easy for me to grasp why it was a bad idea. I was going to school in China, where a red scarf was tied around my neck on the first day of school as I stood in a single file with all the other newcomers. A teacher with a loud and raspy microphone went on to explain the symbolism, saying in her high-pitched and animated voice that the red scarf represents a piece of the national flag and the blood of the martyrs. To wear the red scarf is to show patriotism and love for the country. And we were now part of the Young Pioneers of China — the youth group of the Communist Party, a great honor that came with responsibilities and, most of all, loyalty.

At the time, I couldn't fathom what a protest would look like and how dangerous it would be. Danger not in the sense of physical violence, but division of social solidarity. "What makes China, the most populated nation, strong is only in the absolute unity of each citizen. We must trust those in power and office," my junior high teacher would later tell me. "Our leaders are wise and experienced, with visions and plans exponentially more complete than ours," my mother would echo. "What else was the government supposed to do...?" my friends would ask regarding the Tiananmen Square Massacre (if they believe it happened at all, as the Chinese government has been trying to erase it from history). I'll complete the sentence: *What else was the government supposed to do but to shoot bullets through and drive tanks over tens and thousands of peaceful student protestors? They were there for too long, asking for too much.*

Some people say communism is like a religion. This may be why. In the West, some religionists think communism is threatening in the same way that some communists think religion is blinding. In both cases, the critics claim that the system prompts people to sacrifice their individualism and self-determination to the people in charge.

It was my mother's hope for us to stay close and true to our religion that brought me from the red scarves of primary school to the mountains of Utah. On March 4th, 2020, that hope was challenged. I was with one of my gay friends that morning. Together, we found out the news that the removal of the clause "homosexual behavior" from the BYU honor code had been misinterpreted by the students and even the Honor Code Office. Two weeks before, BYU had announced a change in the honor code consistent with the updated Church Handbook: the removal of the clause "homosexual behavior"

from the list of activities which could result in the expulsion of students. Students around the campus had a wide variety of reactions. Most were shocked and many queer students went directly to the Honor Code Office for clarification. After receiving confirmation from the Office, many celebrated, with queer students feeling safe enough to come out to their peers and couples feeling sufficiently accepted to show affection publicly. However, two weeks later, the school reversed itself. The official interpretation, announced abruptly from the Church Education System, was that the removal of the clause actually changed nothing — LGBTQ+ students could not date before and cannot date now without risking discipline.

My friend wasn't angry; he was sad and frustrated. Perhaps he predicted this — the change had been too good to be true. I was speechless and without words of comfort. Finally, he broke the silence while scrolling on his phone, "There is a protest in Brigham Square right now," he then looked at me with his tired but determined eyes and asked, "Do you want to go with me?"

I never thought I would go to a protest, but it was an easy decision.

I grabbed my sweater, reached out to hold his hand as he threw his backpack over his shoulder. He stopped and let his backpack dangle on his shoulder for a little bit, and then put it down next to mine — we knew we were not going to class for the rest of the day. How could we? We walked out of the Tanner Building and felt embraced by a warm bath of sunlight. The warmth was surprising for a March day and seemed like an odd contrast to what we were feeling inside.

The protest was not formally organized; it had only been hours since the announcement. There were more students at the protest than I expected, but there were even more bystanders. The protestors walked in looping circles, chanting slogans, holding signs and flags, and even singing hymns. Normally, I prefer quieter ways of advocacy. My voice sounded uncomfortable when I tried to proclaim a repeated slogan and my stride wasn't bold or confident. After awhile I started to notice the people surrounding us: some who were watching crossed their arms, some engaged in conversations, some walked by with disapproving thumbs down, and some simply ignored us. But most just stared. I later learned that my younger sister's friend watched that little protest for hours, and I suspected many others did as well. I didn't understand, and I wondered what was going through their minds.

I don't know what was going through the minds of the bystanders who stood there for hours, but I suspect it was not judgment and it was not criticism. Judgment is quick; criticism is pointed. Maybe many of them had celebrated the change as a great blessing, a long-waited revelation! And now the abrupt reverse left them awkwardly hanging, forced to figure out what they believed, not just what they were told to believe.

I don't have the eloquence to explain doctrinal inconsistencies and present my conviction on the topic of LGBTQ+ people. In many ways, I am more similar to the bystanders than the protestors, augmented by almost a decade of education designed by an authoritarian government in my formative years, along with being part of a conservative religion my entire life. However, the moment my friend asked me to go to the protest with him, I crossed the glaring line separating the two groups instinctively like a visceral reflex. I love my friend. Giving him my support in times of hurt and confusion felt like the only right thing to do.

Gretel Tam (right) at the honor code protests at Brigham Young University.

Even though I felt strong in my convictions, the indecisiveness of the onlookers caused me to doubt myself. Like an inescapable mirror it reflected how I was starting to feel inside as I felt my past and logical side pulling me back over the line. The voices of my junior high teachers, my mother, and Church leaders rang in my head. And what if I am wrong? What if I claim to act by the Spirit when I'm actually deceived? What if being a good member of the Church means that I can never disagree with authorities?

Can I be critical and humble? Can I be an individual and part of a whole? Can a "feeling" be a legitimate enough reason to stand where I stand?

I thought of Eve and the choice she made in the Garden of Eden. Unlike most Christians, we believe Eve was inspired and not deceived, and that the Fall was a blessing not a curse. Eve was tasked to make a life or death decision with the weight of all humanity and the span of eternity without the knowledge of good and evil, but with her intuition. And with that powerful intuition, she knew she had to leave *everything* she knew behind for something better, even though all she knew was perfect. What is better than perfection? How can this choice be logically right? For reasons we know now, that decision to disobey and risk must have felt absolutely right to her.

I wonder if Eve panicked after she ate the fruit. Maybe as she accounted for her action to Adam? Maybe after Adam ate? Maybe she never questioned herself.

I thought of Adam's intuition, too, his choice to follow and support Eve's decision possibly in a moment of confusion. Did it take much convincing? Did he simplify her transgression to mere weakness? Did he blame her as he took his bite? Or did he choose death and Eve because it was easily the only right thing to do?

I thought of why God didn't give them all the information. Why didn't God tell Adam and Eve a Savior was already provided? That they must die in order to live? If the result would have been the same, why was the first test of humanity a test of intuition?

Our ability to follow intuition may be connected to our potential to attain godhood. Why would our Heavenly Parents who want us to become like them give us black and white questions and answers? How would we know we are really following the Spirit if the choices aren't complicated and even contradicting at times? How can we grow if we aren't put in uncomfortable positions faced with difficult dilemmas? How can we learn if we don't respect the complexities of the questions presented and merely hush our curiosity with an unmovable deference to authority? When we spend our days reaching and yearning for heaven, do we remember there's a piece of heaven that has been and will always be with us? Our intuition, the light of Christ, our godly potential seeping through from eons ago, reminding us that as we look up, we must also look inward, reminding us to trust in our goodness. And because of that goodness, we have always wanted what Heavenly Parents want us to do and have. Perhaps we are not learning to "submit our will" to God as much as we are learning to cut away the noise of the world and challenges of mortality, and rediscover our desires that have always aligned with God's plan.

I continued to march and began shifting my attention from the bystanders to the protestors around me. There were moments of frustration and pain, but most protestors were upbeat and positive. A superficial glance may have seen them as happy. Maybe that's what the bystanders were trying to decode: how is the group that should be feeling helpless, joyfully exposing themselves to more disappointment? I thought the same when I was watching clips of the Tiananmen Square protest in Beijing. There was a phase in the seven-week-long protest where many students participated in a hunger strike. Proudly and happily, they attached writings like "No Eating" on their bodies to show their commitment. The goal was to starve until there was dialogue with the government. Knowing how the story ends, I felt embarrassed and sad for their useless flounder. But they believed in something that I do not: they believed the Chinese government valued their lives and cared about them. Otherwise, they wouldn't have pitifully put their lives as the condition of the bargain. Sometimes in situations of utter despair, hope is disproportionately magnified. The courage and faith to put themselves in such a vulnerable position, betting on shared humanity, speaks volumes. How it was interpreted as treason and a danger to society bewilders me.

All that thinking slowed my pace in the protest. I realized I was no longer marching with my friend, but with strangers who could have been him, strangers who also saw me as their friend as I walked beside them. I caught up with my friend and asked how he was feeling. "I am a lot better now," he said. "Thank you so much for doing this. It means a lot."

Beneath every virtuous protest is hope, no matter how dim and seemingly impossible. Central to every worthy protest is a desire to be heard and valued. I do not know if I will tell my daughter regretfully that when I was younger, I joined the 2020 BYU Honor Code protest, the Black Lives Matter uprising, or the many other movements I now plan to participate in. I do not know what role protests play in systems that are inherently undemocratic. I do know this: When my friends need me to give hope and support, to listen and value them, I will listen to my intuition and do exactly that.

Ministering Through JustServe

FARA SNEDDON

At a Public Affairs Denver Area Coordinating Council meeting in 2015, the area media coordinator shared a document he had prepared to educate local opinion leaders about Mormons in advance of a new temple. He was looking for input. One of the "Did you know?" points on this document was that LDS women have an equal presence in church leadership and jobs. I raised my hand. "I can understand what you're trying to do here," I explained, "but this is terribly disingenuous." And it was. I don't know the numbers of how many women have a calling in the LDS Church compared to how many men, but whether or not the numbers are close, the fact is when we look at women and men in leadership positions, there is no equal presence. There is even more disparity when we consider the authority (either tacit or institutional) that women and men in these leadership callings actually hold.

At the time of this meeting, I was new to my JustServe Stake Director/Specialist calling. I had little understanding of what Public Affairs (now officially called Communication) did, other than serve as the umbrella for JustServe. What I did know, however, was that I had never before been in a church meeting where the seats at the front of the room were all occupied by women. My

ARTIST STATEMENT

She believed her offering was enough,
And it was.
More than enough.
She believed she had in her hands
Enough to feed five thousand,
And there was.
She believed
That what her Savior was in search of
Was her.
She was the one who gave
Just what He needed
To be able to teach
And to save.
She believed
And didn't doubt.
She had courage
To propose
Amidst the scoffs
And hunger throes —
A brave girl
believed.

"She Believed"
Sarah Richards Samuelson | IG: @tulippainter

coordinating council's director, assistant director, interfaith director, and secretary were all successful, intelligent, strong, capable women. These women were the face of the LDS Church for the opinion leaders and every community in my area.

The Church has had many starts and stops in the elevation of women's ecclesiastical worth over the last two hundred years. At times it feels very much like two steps forward and three steps back as retrenchment repeats itself. I think often of T. S. Eliot's poem "The Journey of the Magi" in which, on the road to serve Christ, the gift-bearers are met with the cold, sore-footed camels, gouging shopkeepers, and a devastating lack of information. But they keep going — despite their vision of the cross, the failure of mankind, Death. They keep journeying because it is the work they must do with the gifts they have. And the promise that lies silent after the poem ends, for me at least, is that there will be a time for rebirth and healing.

I don't believe that Communication (Public Affairs) will be the vehicle of great healing, though I do find hope in women being called to serve in more visible and empowering ways, both in the Church and in the community. In JustServe, however, I see the promise of hope. I have seen JustServe change the roles of women in my stake leadership. I have seen JustServe reconnect the Relief Society with its authority and calling, and I have seen JustServe bring people closer on their own Maji-like journey towards Christ's balm, a salve that can heal us, our families, and our world.

At its simplest, JustServe is a free website populated with service opportunities in your area. Stake leadership, often in the form of a calling like mine, identifies local needs, develops them into service opportunities, and builds relationships with community partners. Perhaps Salt Lake sees JustServe as a tool to correct our solipsism, or perhaps Church leaders just want to build an enormous clearinghouse of service opportunities. Regardless, every stake in North America is supposed to be using JustServe as a tool for meaningful member service and, at the helm, are lots of women.

In October 2018, General Relief Society President Jean Bingham recorded a video for stake Relief Society presidents. She spoke about JustServe, and then she turned its stewardship over to them, promising "great opportunities to let our light shine outside the cultural hall together with others as we bless the communities we call home." This was a sea change. Let me explain: when I was called to build a functioning JustServe for my stake, I reached out for best practices from neighboring stake directors. One, a man perhaps twenty years older than I, explained that all church service was a function of priesthood authority and, done correctly, it would be run by priesthood quorums. He was, unsurprisingly, wrong. Three years later President Bingham put service right where it historically had always been, under the stewardship of the Relief Society. This is the first moment, post 1920, that there has been a direct line from a stake Relief Society president to the general Relief Society president.

Back in 1842, at the sixth meeting of the Relief Society, the prophet Joseph turned the key to the Relief Society women. He explained to them what this act meant: as Relief Society members, they had authority and power to administer for themselves and receive direct revelation and inspiration from God. These women understood that when Joseph turned the key to them, he and they were ushering in a new dispensation for the entirety of women everywhere. Emma Smith, as the Relief Society president, was the steward over all women, all children, and all families, just as president Jean Bingham is today. As for the changes that occurred for women throughout the rest of the 19 century and 20 century? — Relief Society president Emmeline Wells explained that "[Joseph] 'turned the key in favor of woman.' Since that time what a noble work has been accomplished in woman's favor by hundreds of heroic women in this and other nations, including many of the society which the prophet organized." All these gains for women were because Joseph turned the key to them, and with their new spiritual empowerment they were uplifted and could rightfully claim and return to the heights that God envisioned.

There is historic precedent for church leadership recognizing JustServe as being the stewardship of the Relief Society. In 1842, the first role of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society was to do two things: help build the temple and support the poor in Nauvoo. The Society women did everything from raising money and selling their belongings and their skilled time, to providing women and men with jobs in the community. They supplied clothing, monetary support, and medical care. They participated in ministry and administration, both physical and spiritual, caring for the needy and those who were sick. They ministered. This parallels what our ward Relief Societies have focused on since the 1970s: the sisters, their families, and their spiritual and physical needs.

The next iteration of the Relief Society came in January 1854, when women who had been members for the original Relief Society organized a "Society of females for the purpose of making clothing for Indian women and Children." This moved the focus of service outside the church community, which parallels the vision of JustServe over much of the last eight years. A year later after these sisters met, Brigham Young encouraged wards to do the same. They called themselves Indian Relief Societies, and in addition to making clothes for the indigenous people, they taught English, sanitation skills, prenatal care, and

also gave religious instruction. They were at times called upon to be ministers and to administer spiritually and physically to the needs of the nonmembers in their community.

The organization of their efforts were certainly rooted in the desire to civilize what they saw as degenerate and savage, prejudices rooted in the racism of Brigham Young and the theology of whiteness. While their shift outside self was positive, the worldview that accompanied such service was violent colonialism. These are the same issues that often go unchecked in LDS service today, particularly in youth service missions to underdeveloped countries: whiteness and Mormonism are not skills that qualify us to serve; in fact, they often corrupt the pure love of Christ with self-serving condescension and poisonous us/them binaries. To truly serve others requires that one check her biases and ego, that one enters in the holy space of serving humbly, as one of the least of these.

In December 1867, Brigham Young stood up in General Conference and told the bishops to call a ward Relief Society president to reorganize the Society in their wards. In 1880, John Taylor officially made Eliza Snow the Relief Society president for the church. Eliza was put in charge of all the youth, all the Primary children, and, by extension, all the community needs where Mormons had settled. This was the third role of the Relief Society: to bring the ministry of Christ to all people, Church member or not, by administering in service and love. The Relief Society was again the steward over all the women of the world and the communities that support them.

It is only right that service in both our wards and communities be something that our Relief Society stake presidents oversee. All of those needs in our communities and in our wards are under her stewardship as she follows in the footsteps of women like Eliza Snow, Bathsheba Young, and Emmeline Wells, our foremothers who held a powerful and reformative vision of ministering, who led with significant authority and capability a general Relief Society that existed parallel to male priesthood organization. As for your and my stake Relief Society president? She is "exercising her priesthood authority in directing JustServe for her stake, mirroring the leadership of Sister Jean Bingham and Sister Sharon Eubank."

JustServe, along with Communication, is a kind of liminal space in the running of our stakes. Those who serve here do so invisibly in their wards, have significant access to stake leadership, and get instruction directly from area coordinating counsels and area authorities. The rules of gender hierarchy that function in the stake do not necessarily apply in JustServe and Communication committees. In all my callings throughout my life, it is only as my stake's JustServe director that I have men who report to me. My stake Relief Society president, as the one who oversees JustServe in our stake, conducts the monthly stake meeting in the presence of our stake presidency and multiple high counselors.

Our church leaders in Salt Lake have made a point to encourage priesthood leaders to call women — from the stake level through the area level — into JustServe, Communication, and Interfaith callings. In North America, four out of seven Area Communication Directors are women. There are only twenty-one such callings in the world, and women hold this position in Europe, the Philippines, Central America, Asia, and Africa — and the Area Managers they report to include many women. According to Rebecca Jensen, Communication Director for the North America Central Area, just under half of the Coordinating Communication Counsel directors are women. These callings are not closed-door positions that reach only as far as the meetinghouse. Quite the opposite: Communication directors, whether on the stake, coordinating council, or area level, are the public face of the Church and tasked with managing the Church's relationship with outside communities.

Having so many women administrating in high level callings does much silent work for the rest of us. It gives male priesthood leaders opportunities to work with sisters in a collaborative and partnership way rather than as boss to employee, particularly when the sister's ecclesiastical authority outweighs his. The stewardship of an Area or Coordinating Council Communication Director includes providing training and counsel for Area Seventy and Stake Presidents.

Women who serve as stake, coordinating council, or area directors are often representatives of the Church in meetings with other religious and governmental leaders, and often a large number of these leaders are male, in Rebecca Jensen's experience. A Catholic Archbishop and his staff are all men. The old guard government of many a town is likely to be men. When the LDS Church sends their representative into these heavily male meetings, and she walks in not in a suit and a white shirt and a tie but with confidence in her calling, her authority, and her ministry, it makes a very loud statement about where our values are and what work we want to do. It's disruptive and, as such, it leads to meaningful work. Such callings allow women to serve in capacities that had not been available to them for much of the twentieth century, and publicly place Mormon women at the front of the true work of Christ.

The work is the work of ministry. Of service. Of Christlike love for the least of these: "We could cover the earth with members of the Church, put a meetinghouse on every corner, dot the land with temples, fill the earth with copies of the Book of

Mormon, send missionaries to every country, and say millions of prayers. But if we neglect to grasp the core of the gospel message and fail to help those who suffer or turn away those who mourn, and if we do not remember to be charitable, we 'are as [waste], which the refiners do cast out,'" Elder Uchtdorf tells us. JustServe, if nothing else, is a tangible, click-able, reminder that we are here to comfort those who mourn and feed the hungry.

At its best, JustServe is a powerful vision to change the lives of women, families, and men in our wards and stakes and our communities, and it is powerful simply because it is the core of Christ's message. To quote Elder Uchtdorf again: "To put it simply, having charity and caring for one another is not simply a good idea. It is not simply one more item in a seemingly infinite list of things we ought to consider doing. It is at the core of the gospel — an indispensable, essential, foundational element. Without this transformational work of caring for our fellowmen, the Church is but a facade of the organization God intends for His people. Without charity and compassion we are a mere shadow of who we are meant to be — both as individuals and as a Church. Without charity and compassion, we are neglecting our heritage and endangering our promise as children of God. No matter the outward appearance of our righteousness, if we look the other way when others are suffering, we cannot be justified."

When we serve, we minister and administer to those who are broken and in need of healing. While JustServe's website is a good place to find opportunities to serve, sometimes we need to adjust how we think about service rather than fixate on a specific service project. I often share the following list of ideas that can help Relief Societies, wards, and families gain the real vision of service; perhaps some of these ideas may be helpful to you: 1) Service is a reliable and powerful healer; it can be the answer to many of your questions and needs. 2) Serving together as a couple may help strengthen and heal a marriage, and a family serving together may help children feel the spirit of the Lord and develop or strengthen their testimonies of the two great commandments. 3) Ask yourself "what need am I going to encounter today?"; just asking this simple question teaches us to see the needs around us and look outside of ourselves towards others. 4)When you encounter a need in your community, share that need with your family, friends, or your Relief Society sisters; you do not have to have a "how to fix it" answer or a specific service project in mind. Just naming this need and asking others to see it can open up productive, creative, and spiritually powerful revelation.

JustServe and, by extension, Communication have opened up space for meaningful and powerful opportunities for women to serve with authority and efficacy. Their visibility offers hope for me as I struggle towards Christ. Their service and sacrifice in these callings have meaning and purpose, and I am grateful for them. Like the balm of Gilead, our service is not only an ointment in our communities and for those who are in pain and suffering, it is also a salve for those of us who serve. It can help connect us to God when we are suffering in our own lives. The promise of being healed is, like the Magi carrying the heavy load of their gifts, what compels us to journey. This is the real vision: He heals our wounds, and when He is not here on earth we stand in His place. And that is what saves us.

I Think I Might Take Up Writing Again

REBEKAH ORTON

My daughter asked for WhiteOut
to line edit
someone else's Proclamation
of what she should be
should be.

It's not a luxury I afforded myself,
while I was penning love letters to
what I didn't think I could have,
trusting my hope
in the crannies,
seeing soil instead of stone,
a ladder instead of bars.

She's painted clouds
across my broken altar,
a blizzard that would
have frozen her out
if I had been the one with
the correcting fluid.

I almost took it back,
the little bottle with its paintbrush,
the wrinkling drying paper,
opaque gasps
among dead black words.

But
She had her pen out,
blue ink that could flow for days,
fill up the spaces and the margins
and the other side of the page,
that could write her
towards clean, blank paper.

Consecrating Our Thoughts to God

Sarah Gusky Kemer

This sacrament talk was given on August 19, 2018 in the Lynnfield Ward in Massachusetts.

I went to a small liberal arts school for an obscure graduate degree in something I enjoyed; it was expensive with little external funding. At the beginning of my second semester, two women in the year above me started planning a charity event. Great, I thought, a chance to give back to the community and stretch my acting legs a little more. Imagine my shock then when it turned out it was a fundraising event *for the graduate students*. They were trying to raise a few hundred dollars to put into their own pockets while advertising it as a charitable event. It's fine to get creative for funding, especially when you're in the arts, but the marketing was a little disgusting to me. I quickly involved myself and added a food donation to it, as the food pantry near us was desperate for a few items. We raised the paltry sum, plus two large boxes of canned goods.

I was not a member of the Church back then, but I could see needs and what needed to be done. I learned a lesson with that event about the combination of service and sacrifice. Service should involve a sacrifice, even if it is just a little persistence and a tank of gas. We cannot serve for selfish reasons, or just for the reward of it. I now have another word for this combination of service and sacrifice: consecration.

Sacrifice, service, charity — these are all scriptural virtues. The power of the added understanding of consecration, however, lifts service to a higher level. Consecration is service with sacrifice that, as Neal Maxwell explains, "[involves] pressing forward 'with a steadfastness in Christ' with a 'brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.'"[1] We covenant to consecrate our lives when we're in the temple — our time, effort, talents. We know what this looks like on the large scale. We pay tithing to Church funds that not only keep our chapels and temples open and running, but to funds that feed those in need. When someone in our ward is injured, has a new baby, or needs some obvious assistance, we are all right there. When we know someone is in need, we show up.

But what about the day-to-day? What does daily service look like when we elevate it to the level of consecration — a consistent sacrifice of our time, efforts, and talents? Speaking at a BYU women's devotional, Sherri Palmer answered these questions by examining Revelations 2; in this scripture, "Heavenly Father is saying that He knows our works. So what works or service are we personally known for? Do we hesitate when confronted with the opportunity to serve? Is it convenient to serve? Or is service something we sign up for once in a while when the sign-up sheet is passed around?"[2]

Who are you serving in your daily life? There are the obvious answers. Your spouse, your children, your parents, siblings, friends, co-workers. I don't know about you, but those aren't the only people I come into contact with every day. On my daily commute, I pass by a few dozen cars, each of which holds at least one person. In the grocery on a Saturday — forget it; I easily come into contact with hundreds. I live in an apartment building with four other families. How am I serving each one of them *even when they don't look like they need help?* When they don't *ask* for help?

I can tell you what I do right now. I use kind words. I assume the best of people. I use my blinker when I drive, I hold doors, I look people on the street in the eyes — and with a smile when I'm feeling extra cheerful. I say hello in elevators and I make children laugh and I do a bunch of things that are easy for me to do. These little things are good, but they take no effort whatsoever on my part. They take no time — I can smile on the go. They take no talent. They aren't service and sacrifice; they aren't consecration.

In the same talk, Elder Maxwell explains:

> *Once the telestial sins are left behind and henceforth avoided, the focus falls ever more on the sins of omission. These*

omissions signify a lack of qualifying fully for the celestial kingdom. Only greater consecration can correct these omissions, which have consequences just as real as do the sins of commission. Many of us thus have sufficient faith to avoid the major sins of commission, but not enough faith to sacrifice our distracting obsessions or to focus on our omissions. Most omissions occur because we fail to get outside ourselves. We are so busy checking on our own temperatures, we do not notice the burning fevers of others even when we can offer them some of the needed remedies, such as encouragement, kindness, and commendation. The hands which hang down and most need to be lifted up belong to those too discouraged even to reach out anymore.[3]

What are my sins of omission? I have many. I'm willing to admit to a few here: I grumble at cars. I don't always pray enough or follow my personal revelation closely enough. I focus too much on the task at hand and not the people around me — I don't look up at the grocery. How many opportunities for consecration am I missing by just not looking up?

True consecration — that higher level of service — requires us to act more outside of ourselves. Is this possible 100% of the time here on Earth? No. And I don't think God is surprised by that. I agree with Nora Nyland Keer when she says, "I think it's fair to assume that Heavenly Father realizes that we're the only thing He has to work with, and despite that, or probably because of that, He is ready to

ARTIST STATEMENT

With the pandemic I felt my creative self being crushed. I had zero desire to paint and was lacking any inspiration. I have always loved plants, and I felt inspired to capture the beauty of succulents. So I blind ordered 50 plants and for the first time in months I was excited to paint. Succulents, especially echeveria and aeonium varieties, have stunning symmetry and beautiful patterns that provide a sense of order in the chaos that we live. Painting them from life allows me to capture their subtle color shifts and flower-like magnificence. These little plants have brought light back into my life.

Top to bottom: *"Little Warty," "Sunburst," "Morning Beauty"*

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inspire us, buoy us, and enlarge our capacities, notwithstanding our weaknesses, if we seek him with the humble confidence that He will do so."[4] We can do all things through Christ.

What do we do to raise our own level of service, to act more in service than we talk about it, beyond the obvious and much-needed pray, read, obey? Here is my proposition: Love actively. Become aware of our sins of omissions. Create "automatic responses" within ourselves.

Love needs to be something we don't just talk about, not just something we say. "I'd love to help with this service project!" must be a commitment to action rather than something to blow off when other things get in the way, We also have to ask ourselves to identify the last time we have shown someone — not our spouse, our child, our family or friends, but a stranger, maybe someone we don't like, or an acquaintance — that we love them?

When I'm having trouble with answering this question, I turn to a BYU Women's Conference talk by Kathy Clayton. She connects the three ways Jesus loves in a triangle — love of God, love of Neighbor, and love of Self — and explains how each of those leads to the other. If we are having a hard time loving someone, if we strive to come closer to Christ, we will show them more love. She points me to two scriptures. The first, Galatians 5:13: "*By* love, serve one another." The second, Ezekiel 34: 2–4, which carries the charge for us to love *actively*:

> *Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; [the Lord goes on to contrast with how He cares for his flock].*

There will be a difference between how we serve and how Christ serves. But, as Sister Clayton says,

> *Clearly the Lord is serious about our rolling up our shirtsleeves and actively going to work to seek, serve, and save others. That's what Christlike love of others requires. . . . "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart . . . might, mind, and strength." That every-fiber-of-our-being kind of love is active, willing, hard-working, humble, energetic, obedient, submissive, trusting, patient, long suffering. It is best characterized by Jesus Christ's willingness to serve as the Savior of all mankind. . . . He meekly and modestly offered to unselfishly submit His will to His Father's with all the implications of that sublime deference.*[5]

Active love is Jesus's love.

There are more women whose talks I turn to as well. Relief Society General Board Member Leone O. Jacob's 1949 talk "Prepare Thy Heart" tells us how to watch for our sins of omission by preparing our hearts: "What does preparing one's heart mean? It means checking up on oneself, scrutinizing one's daily life to see what is there, to see what is there of value and what should be thrown out. It means humbling oneself before the Lord. It means ridding oneself of bitterness and selfishness. It means complete forgiveness of all wrongs inflicted upon us, real or imagined. It means opening wide one's heart to righteousness, putting oneself in an attitude to receive good."[6]

Jennifer Brinkerhoff Platt, some seventy years later, continues this thought by asking "What behavior do you want to change so you can love others the way Christ does? Think about it. . . . Rather than focusing [only] on behaviors that might change those ideas, we study the doctrine, learn the WHY behind what we're trying to change, then patiently pursue it. We can discover and understand the doctrine, then be really intentional in watching for the miracles that follow."[7]

Basically, we need to be a little more self-aware. We need to work on introspection through prayer and doctrinal study, figure out the why behind what we should be doing, and change our actions accordingly. You know who does this very well? Eleanor Shellstrop in *The Good Place* (spoilers follow).

Eleanor was a horrible person on earth, but in a weird and very Michael Shur way, she ends up in the "bad" place posing as the "good" place, and learns from a philosophy teacher to try to posthumously earn her place there. While her "doctrine" is the philosophical teachings of Kant and Hume, the concept is the same. She evaluates her past actions; she reads and studies why she should be "good," and she changes her future actions to fit this reasoning.

We should all strive to be this version of Eleanor Shellstrop. I hope we aren't reading this thinking, "Yes, yes, I know exactly who needs to hear this" as we think of someone other than ourselves. Do you know who needs to hear it? *You*. And also *me*. While we should not be so wrapped up in our own "temperatures" that we miss what's around us, timely introspection when it leads us to change our actions towards greater development can further bring us to a capacity to actively love as Christ does.

Finally, we can raise our level of service by creating habits and automatic responses for charity. Sherri Palmer perfectly explains it:

> *We may start out with creating a habit of always being willing to or being ready to do something extra. Maybe you enjoy mowing the lawn, so if a neighbor needs help, that can be your automatic reaction — you can mow their lawn. Or maybe you have a special chicken enchilada recipe that turns out great every time — that can be your automatic reaction if there is a need for a meal in your ward. Maybe you have a keen listening ear and enjoy conversation — that can be your automatic reaction when a family member is in need. The key is to create automatic reactions within ourselves.*[8]

When we plan ahead, we no longer hesitate when we are needed. I already know what I'm good at when it comes to big help — I enjoy grocery shopping for others, I can watch kids on specific days and times, and I can bring a dinner by. But I'm also going to try to plan ahead, look up more at the grocery. I might see someone who needs help reaching an item, a parent who needs a kind word, or an employee who just needs someone to stop grabbing the items they're trying to stack. People I miss by looking down.

Let's take this a step further: we need to create an automatic response to judgment. That is, create an automatic response for when we judge. And we will. It's human nature. Elder Marvin J. Ashton explains that "Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don't judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is accepting someone's differences, weaknesses, and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended when someone doesn't handle something the way we might have hoped. Charity is refusing to take advantage of another's weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us. Charity is expecting the best of each other."[9] These judgments can be big — "she doesn't care about her kids because she works outside of the home" — but they can also be small — "oh, not another of her liberal rants at the pulpit." But they are *all* harmful.

When we really evaluate it, all our judgment comes from fear, pain, or insecurity. We judge someone else because of a fear of what they represent or our lack of exposure to their lives or culture. We judge someone because what we are seeing reminds us of a bad instance in our own lives, and we feel that pain again. Or we judge someone because they epitomize an insecurity we have about ourselves and our own lives. But if we are truly striving to be Christlike, why are we putting *our* suffering onto someone else? I covenanted to bear your burdens, not put my burdens on your back. And conversely, when someone is being judgy with us, we need to remember they are acting out of pain and respond accordingly. Don't let people walk all over you! But maybe offer a helping hand and see if they soften. Act in love towards them.

So how do we create an automatic response to our own judgment so we can stop doing it? First we have to recognize it. That's self-awareness. But after that? I'll tell you my plan at least. Each next time I start to judge someone, I'm going to stop my thought process. I'm going to ask myself what it is I don't know about this person and their situation, and I'm going to pray for them and in repentance for a softer heart for myself. Instead of judging, I'll focus my effort to soften myself, to work for change, and grow my talent (a talent we all have) in praying to God.

I will run into my judgment of others again and again. So will you. But when I stop my judgments in their tracks and frame the stopping as an act of consecration, it makes it easier for me to have the desire toward real consecration. As King Benjamin says, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God."[10]

Let us remember that our service is not just carried out through the big acts but also through our daily actions and our hearts as well. As we strive to consecrate our lives to God — to serve and sacrifice for Him — let's remember that we're doing so on our way to becoming gods and goddesses; we are doing so among those who can become gods and goddesses themselves. Let us hold ourselves to a higher level of service accordingly, one that requires active love, self-awareness, and habitual responses.

NOTES:

1. Neal Maxwell, "Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father," General Conference, October 1995.
2. Sherry Palmer, "Convenient Service," BYU Women's Conference, 2014.
3. Neal Maxwell, "Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father," General Conference, October 1995.
4. Nora Nyland Keer, "Come Boldly with Confidence," BYU Women's Conference, 2014.
5. Kathy Clayton, "The Best Measure of True Greatness is how Christlike We Are," BYU Women's Conference, 2011.
6. Leone O. Jacobs, "Prepare Thy Heart," Sept. 29, 1949, in "General Session," Relief Society Magazine 36, no. 12 (Dec. 1949): 819–820.
7. Jennifer Brinkerhoff Platt, "Love One Another, As I Have Loved You," BYU Women's Conference, 2018.
8. Sherry Palmer, "Convenient Service," BYU Women's Conference, 2014.
9. Marvin J. Ashton, "The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword," Ensign, May 1992.
10. Mosiah 2:17

Little and Big

BRITA BROWN ENGH

I had sworn after I graduated from BYU that I would move far, far away from Utah and never return. Part of my reluctance about living in Utah was that I was so similar to the majority of the people in the state: white, Mormon, and descended from pioneers. I was certain that I would stagnate in a place where I wasn't exposed to things outside what I already knew. But there I was — 32 years old, single (doubting that there even existed a person I could be happily married to), and starting a new life back in the heart of the Mormon Corridor so I could live closer to my family. I had an exciting new job and lots of wonderful friends, but I had so much energy to do something meaningful with my life. I wanted to find a way to actually make a difference in the world.

I began an exhaustive search for volunteer opportunities in the Salt Lake Valley, and one day the perfect one popped up: A woman in the local YSA ward was looking for volunteers to be mentors in a new pilot program with Big Brothers Big Sisters. They were enrolling several refugee families in the program to see how local mentors could help the kids with their transition into American life. It sounded like just the thing to keep me from falling into the life of conformity I dreaded.

I signed up and did all the training and the background checks. For the final training, the new Bigs met together to learn about the children and families we would be working with. I had been matched with a Little who was nine years old who had arrived in the States from West Africa a year earlier with her six siblings, mother, and grandmother. The mom was taking English classes and doing job training at Deseret Industries. They had just moved from a crowded apartment to a little house with more bedrooms. They were the only Black family in their new neighborhood. All seven kids were getting mentors.

I still remember how cute and excited little Kiki was that day I first met her. Everyone came out of the house to meet me. While her siblings stared shyly at me with big eyes, Kiki darted around wearing a mischievous smile that lit up the neighborhood. She was fearless. For our first outing together, we went to the library to try to figure out what things she was interested in learning about. We finished at MaggieMoo's where she selected a big cup of bright blue ice cream. She was so fidgety that some of it spilled onto her white pants.

I was supposed to do some kind of activity with Kiki at least twice a month. At first, it seemed like there were unlimited things that she wanted to try. We went to movies and sporting events and restaurants. We cooked together and attended ballets and museums. All of this fun with a child helped to fulfill a deep maternal instinct that I had and that I feared I might not ever get to experience with my own children. Kiki was nothing like me; I was an introvert who enjoyed thinking about and discussing ideas, while Kiki was a dazzling extrovert who loved attention and fun. But in some ways, this made us a great match. She helped me loosen up and enjoy the adventures of life, and I helped her learn how to do boring but necessary school projects.

I was thrilled to see how Kiki's Salt Lake City neighborhood welcomed her family. The local ward did a Sunday evening dessert stroll shortly after they moved in, and I accompanied

ARTIST STATEMENT

In my culture, Kings and Queens sit in state for their subjects to pay homage to them, amidst drumming and dancing. As a child of God, this is my imagination of our Heavenly Father, who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, sitting in the Heavens. Angels around Him, honoring and singing praises to him.

"God's Children" | *Gifty Annan-Mensah* | *IG:@rabeena_designs*

them as they walked around and met the neighbors. I suspected the ward did this primarily to welcome Kiki's family — everyone seemed so happy and excited to meet them. Kiki and her sisters got invited and went to Girls Camp every year after they turned 12, and they knew that they could depend on their Mormon neighbors to be true friends.

Everywhere we went, the whole community seemed happy to welcome Kiki. Big Brothers Big Sisters offered a lot of activities for all of their matches, and we tried to attend as many as we could. I enjoyed watching how Kiki's smile and carefree enthusiasm charmed people and attracted new friends. She wanted to try everything, so I found myself participating with her in a lot of adventures that were out of my comfort zone: horseback riding, announcing at a baseball game, the Hannah Montana movie opening night, a beauty pageant informational meeting.

The stories Kiki told me about life in West Africa troubled me. Her family had been in a refugee camp there for quite a while. She was so very young then – I wasn't sure how much she remembered well, and how much of it was retelling what she heard from her older siblings. She told me that her grandmother had been in prison for many years a long time ago. Now her grandmother was a stooped, nearly toothless presence in a Utah home full of tweens and teenagers. Every time I showed up to get Kiki for an activity, her grandmother rose from her chair to grasp my hands and smilingly inquire after my mother in her language. The kids translated for me at first, and after a few visits I started to understand her warm greetings.

As Muslims, Kiki's family observed Ramadan every year. At first I didn't grasp the implications of a month-long fast from dawn to sunset. Kiki said she was still happy to do activities with me during Ramadan, but she was usually very sleepy during them, having spent much of the short summer night before eating special meals with her family and their friends. I loved learning about this celebratory, devotional aspect of her religion.

Kiki's mom worried that her kids would all rebel against their Muslim heritage here in the United States. Of the three daughters, Kiki was certainly the most rebellious. She wanted to be like the other girls in her classes, and that included clothing choices. On several occasions Kiki's mom lamented to me that she couldn't get Kiki to wear her headscarf. Her mother also worried that Kiki wanted to wear revealing clothing. I listened sympathetically to both Kiki and her mom. I had some experience with religion and clothing choices.

Mentoring Kiki was opening up new worlds for me, too. I had only had a few Black friends in the past, none of them close, and now I was noticing things that hadn't occurred to me before as I tried to experience things through Kiki's eyes. When I took her to the Days of '47 parade, I saw how her attention was grabbed by the Mama's Faith Temple Choir. How had it never crossed my mind that it might feel very lonely to be a Black person in Utah? When we went downtown to the St. Patrick's Day Siamsa to watch the Irish dancers, a drunk man accosted Kiki and her twin brother. "My people were mistreated like yours were. I can relate to you." We looked at each other and giggled nervously as we walked away. "Well, that was weird," I said. I didn't know what else to say. Was this something they had experienced before? Were they annoyed? Scared? I had no idea, and I didn't want to make things worse by probing too much.

We discussed many aspects of American life that were new to Kiki. As the 2008 election approached, I explained about voting and the Electoral College. Her mom wasn't a U.S. citizen yet, but she was working toward it. The day after the election, I went to Kiki's house to help with homework. "You voted for McCain," she said confidently. All her friends' parents had. That's what Utahns did, right? "No," I responded. "I voted for Obama." She looked at me, surprised.

I was a little surprised, myself. I had always voted for Republicans. That's what my family had always done. It's who we were. But since returning to Utah, I found myself studying the candidates and frequently voting for the Democrat. Republicans often just didn't seem to understand or care about the difficulties that many people faced. Now, after a few years of mentoring Kiki, I could see that the Democrats had policies and rhetoric that were more helpful and welcoming to families that looked like hers and that struggled financially like hers. I changed my registration to the Democratic Party. I didn't tell my parents.

Everyone in my family knew all about Kiki, though. I couldn't stop talking about her and how wonderful her family was, how hardworking and determined her amazing mother was. When I met a nice new guy who actually had marriage potential (what a shock that was!), we took Kiki and her twin brother bowling for our second date. I knew this guy was The One when he signed up to become Kiki's twin's Big Brother. A big portion of our courtship included Kiki and her brother. It was enlightening to see how my boyfriend interacted with kids and how they responded to him. At our wedding reception, Kiki and her family filled an entire table and grinned as they watched the antics of my little nieces and nephews.

After I got married and moved across the valley, it became more difficult to do things with Kiki regularly. But we tried to get together at least once a month. Everyone smiled when they found out I was expecting twins. "Of *course* it's twins!"

the other Bigs laughed. Kiki didn't mind doing fewer things with me by then; she was a busy teenager with a job, piles of homework, lots of extra-curricular activities, and a full social life. It made me sentimental – my teenage life had been like that, too. After the babies were born, I found opportunities to leave them at home on occasion so that I could take Kiki prom dress shopping and assist with science projects and college applications.

One of the proudest days of my life was her high school graduation. Sitting up in the balcony, I pointed out Kiki to my 3-year-old. "See, she's the one on the front row with the white headscarf under her red hat." The program listed several scholarships that she and her brother had each received. These kids were going to do wonderful things with their lives, and the potential in the hall was almost overwhelming. Tears poured down my cheeks as Kiki paid tribute to her mother during her graduation talk.

And just like that I was no longer a Big Sister. Kiki was off to new adventures as an adult, and I was consumed with potty training and keeping preschoolers happy. As the months passed, I watched with horror as a man built his presidential campaign on demonization and fear of people like Kiki and her family. A few days after the election, I messaged her at college to make sure that she and her family were doing okay. I wanted her to know that most of the people I knew were upset about the election, too. She wrote back that she was fine, although school was a bit weird at the moment, and she was determined to be hopeful about the future.

But as expected, the immediate future was not pretty for our country. For many decades we had offered a safe new home every year to tens of thousands of refugees like Kiki and her family who were fleeing persecution and hardship. Now new policies were being put in place that excluded most Muslims and eventually most refugees. I was aghast when some of my devout Mormon friends and relatives posted anti-refugee and anti-Muslim things on Facebook. "No!" I responded. "What about Kiki?" They knew that they would never persuade me. How could I persuade them?

Content before to just quietly observe and learn, I could not be silent any longer. These were my people who were being attacked. I was a numbers girl, not a writer, but I started to write anyway. I spoke up about Kiki when I saw xenophobia on social media, and I commented on news articles and blog posts. I attended my neighborhood caucus meetings and became a precinct officer. I started following people from a variety of races, religions and cultures on social media so that I could get educated about issues and learn how to discuss them with my peers and my children. I wasn't brave enough yet to do much more than these things, but I found many like-minded women and united my voice with theirs to gain courage.

And I reflected a lot about how our country got to this ugly place. My whole life I have felt the pull of turning other people into "others," the enemy. It's a temptation for all of us, and it's so much easier than the alternative that Jesus taught: Love one another. How do we overcome that awful pull? I know what is true for me. As I got to know Kiki and her family up close, they were no longer "others." They were my brothers and sisters, good people with the same basic needs and wants as any other human being. I may not be able to convince anyone with my words, but if I can encourage them to get to know individuals who are in that "other" category, to really listen to them and their personal experiences, I'm certain they will learn to see them all with new eyes, without hatred or fear.

The Book of Ruth

CATIE NIELSON

Three women in an upstairs
bathroom; squinting at their lives
in early morning light.

Death's wife smells of Vaseline;
her bad hip keeps her
from sweeping the floor.

Divorce has painted her nails
green for growth or envy;
she holds back the hair of

Abandonment, who
grimaces over her belly and
vomits again in the sink.

Mormon Women's Suffrage History in 2020

Andrea Radke–Moss

In January of 1889, Mormon suffragist Emily Sophia Tanner Richards attended the annual conference of the National Woman Suffrage Association in Washington, D.C., the first of her faith to formally represent Utah in an official, national setting. But as a Mormon woman at a time of heightened tensions over the Church's practice of plural marriage, Emily's reception by the Washington crowd was tepid. Emily sat ready to take the podium for her first public address but discovered that she had been omitted from the program, either purposefully or unintentionally. In an act of great dignity and grace, Susan B. Anthony herself "went to the rear of the platform and conducted Mrs. Richards to the rostrum with every demonstration of respect."[1] Emily gave her address, which, according to a later recollection, was a "powerful antithesis to [the audience's] preconceived impressions, and the change of feeling [in the room] was almost instantaneous."[2] Richards' presence that day symbolized the long fight for equal suffrage waged by women of Utah and Mormonism from the 1870s through the 1890s, and especially the challenges of working within the patriarchal structure of their own religion and against the anti-Mormon prejudices of their fellow women's rights activists. In some ways, little has changed for Mormon feminists today, who still find themselves working within and against religious patriarchy, while also finding their place in the larger conversations about the rights of women nationally and globally.

In the past few years it has become more well known among members of the LDS Church that women in 19th century Utah not only had their own voting rights, but were also activists for women's suffrage nationally. The year 2020 presents us with the opportunity to honor the 150th anniversary of Mormon women's equal voting rights, while also honoring the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. These 1870 and 1920 suffrage victories, though restricted to white women, laid the groundwork for eventual expansion of suffrage to Asian, Indigenous, and Black women over the following decades. The awareness of Mormons' suffrage history has increased churchwide, through the formal efforts of academic historians, as well as the informal efforts of Mormon feminist blogs and social media.[3] Still, the history of Latter-day Saint women's suffrage work is no less astonishing to those who are acquainted with the story, but especially to those who are unfamiliar with the rich early experiences of activist Mormon women.

The story of Utah's suffrage begins in January of 1870, when Utahns learned of the passage of the federal anti-polygamy

Cullom Bill. On January 6, the women of the Salt Lake 15th Ward Relief Society met in a mass protest meeting, which ended with Sister Bathsheba W. Smith moving that "we demand of the Gov (sic) the right of Franchise," which was voted on and passed.[4] Soon after, a mass "Indignation Meeting," was held on January 13, 1870, and was followed by other meetings attended by thousands of Mormon women in defense of plural marriage. On February 4, the legislature passed the equal suffrage law, which Governor Mann signed into law on February 12. When Seraph Young cast her ballot in a Salt Lake City municipal election two days later, she became the first woman in America to exercise the right to vote under an equal suffrage law."[5]

Feminist historians in the fields of women's history, Mormon history, and the American West have found Utah's equal suffrage law baffling because it goes against conventional wisdom and assumptions about Mormon women's position as degraded and oppressed plural wives. How could a community so deeply entrenched in polygamous practice have achieved something so progressive? Contemporary Mormon women usually resolved this conundrum by arguing that some patriarchal systems (outsider, worldly dominance, abusive types) were unrighteous ones, while others (their own loving and covenant-based benevolent types) were righteous ones. In fact, Mormon women were able to reconcile

ABOUT THE IMAGES

Opposite: "Equal Suffrage" banner from the Beaver Woman Suffrage Association in Beaver, Utah. *Courtesy of Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah*

Above: Members of the executive committee of the national suffragists' convention and prominent local women supporting national political freedom for woman, pictured with Senator Reed Smoot, to whom they had just appealed for support of their movement in the next Congress. *Courtesy of the National Woman's Party at Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument*

Next page: A news clipping from the Salt Lake Tribune from October 15, 1915. *Courtesy of Utah Digital Newspapers*

plural marriage with their goals of political and social equality likely due to the development of some economic, spiritual, and familial autonomy during the long separations from husbands in the plural marriage system.[6] It was never the intention of Mormon suffragists to use the political franchise to overturn what most observers considered an inherently imbalanced and unequal marital system; in fact, they defended it consistently and passionately. For that reason, while Mormon women suffragists received only the reluctant and befuddled support of national suffrage leaders, they always enjoyed the unwavering support of Mormon male leadership, and Mormon women were able to pursue their activism without institutional resistance. But their position as enfranchised women was always precarious, subject to the power and reversals of federal authority which always loomed over their practice of polygamy. And, ironically, it was precisely because of Mormon women's defense of plural marriage that they were drawn into the suffrage movement and helped pass the groundbreaking equal suffrage law in the first place.

So why did Utah's male legislators grant the right to vote to women? Some suggested it was a way for the Mormon-dominated legislature to keep Church members an elective majority in the territory, although that step wasn't numerically necessary. More likely Mormon men and women wanted to show outsiders that Utah women were not oppressed, as anti-Mormon propaganda often showed. Really, it came down to Utah women wanting to engage their own protests against the anti-polygamy federal Cullom Bill and to demand Utah's constitutional rights to the freedom of religious practice. While enfranchising Utah's women was usually more about religious freedom than it was about rights for women, Mormon women did accept and even proactively call for (and welcome) the enactment of their voting rights in this context. As Sarah Granger Kimball stated, "she had waited patiently a long time, and now that we were granted the right of suffrage, she would openly declare herself a woman's rights woman, and called upon those who would do so to back her up."[7]

Woman suffrage for Utah women was not a total victory for everyone, not even the women themselves. Although they gained the vote, they still could not hold political office or serve on juries. The victory was even emptier for women of color: no concern was expressed for the political rights of indigenous women in the region; in fact, Bathsheba Smith heralded Mormon women's success in pioneering the West, in spite of the "rude, ignorant, and almost nude Indians [who] were a heavy tax upon us."[8] Furthermore, *Deseret News* editor and suffrage ally George Q. Cannon trotted out the familiar racist argument that "suffrage might be conferred with much greater propriety upon intelligent white women than upon ignorant blacks."[9] Mormon women's aims for religious freedom and gender

Woven Power

ASHLEY STURGILL

I feel it in the warning
of a thunderhead above
darkening the skies, quieting
every feathered voice.
In each crack of blinding electric light-
released in the earthen smell
of cleansing rain.
It casts off the tail of a star
falling from Her place in night's sky,
terrifyingly beautiful and
bright landing gently, lightly dusting the
wings of a starling in flight.
I hear it whispered on the breeze
carrying seasons' shift
the first cool breeze-
balmy summer's reprieve
the first warm one-
a promise to tired souls waning.
In the terrifying force of an
avalanche it roars. A cliffside of snow
sloughs from its stony face to
barrel ravenously, consuming
the valley below.
It stills
to hold its breath
in the mountain's heart before
spreading down the rocky roots
into crystal alpine springs.
It breaks into the light, at last
twirling through a downward current.
Finding its voice in the laughing ripples
of a mirrored surface,
sparking and glinting upon
rainbow scales, translucent fins
swimming towards home.
Reflecting Mother Sun's face
that healing, life-giving light,
its thread weaves and knits
strengthens and draws
between us
within us —
woven power.

equity came with a conscious avoidance and even rejection of racial justice typical of their suffrage sisters nationally.

Following the 1870 suffrage win for white Mormon women came a succession of other milestones. The *Woman's Exponent* was founded in 1872 as a consciously feminist and pro-suffrage newspaper; it was closely tied to the Relief Society, with plural wife Emmeline B. Wells eventually rising to both the magazine's editorship (1877-1914) and later the presidency of the Relief Society. Further, both Mormon and non-Mormon Utah women began to make connections to the national suffrage movement. As Sarah Granger Kimball recalled: "Now 52 years ago I would not have dared to say the bold, grand things that Miss [Susan B.] Anthony said; it would have made me so unpopular and I hardly dared to shoulder it; but the seed was planted within my soul and I have been laboring for the same cause — I felt that it was uplifting, that it was necessary for the nation, and as time rolled on we were very careful.[10]

Even as suffrage awareness increased in the territory, so did federal anti-polygamy prejudice. In 1879, in spite of national leaders' ongoing reluctance to recognize Mormon women, Emmeline B. Wells and Zina Young Card were invited by Stanton and Anthony to address the National Woman Suffrage Association convention in Washington, D.C. But this outreach failed to stall the growing federal anti-polygamy efforts. Thus in 1879, the U.S. v. Reynolds case determined that the government could legally restrict religious practice, which opened the way for increasingly punitive measures against the Church in Utah. In 1882, the Edmunds Act took away the right to vote of all practicing polygamists, both male and female. Once again, Mormon women turned their efforts to defending polygamy and regaining the vote. In spite of their efforts, the government passed the 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act, in which the voting restriction was extended to all Utah women, regardless of religious affiliation or marital practice. This devastating act had the effect of reigniting grass-roots Utah suffrage activism; it also solidified the support of national leaders to help Utah win back the vote. To that end, Utah women sought to create formal suffrage organizations and to build their national associations.[11]

SALT LAKE WOMEN WELCOME SUFFRAGE ENVOY

CONGRESSMAN HOWELL ENLISTS FOR THE CAUSE

PARTICIPANTS IN YESTERDAY'S SUFFRAGE CELEBRATION. From left to right the four in front are Miss M. A. Kindberg, driver of the automobile; Miss Ingberg Kindstedt, mechanician; Mrs. Emmeline B. Wells, Utah's premier suffragist, and Mrs. Sarah Bard Field, messenger.

In 1888, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) organized the first National Council of Women and International Council of Women to help unify all women's rights groups. Emily S. Richards received permission in January 1889 to form a Utah chapter of the NWSA. At the Utah WSA's January 1890 convention, Sarah Kimball was elected president, Emily Richards vice-president, and Phoebe Beattie as executive committee chair —all three notable because of their monogamous marital status.[12] Utah's suffrage organization experienced a conscious shift away from polygamous leadership and defense of plural marriage to embracing a public face of monogamy, a move that was reinforced when the Church officially ended polygamy in the 1890 Manifesto. When two rival national suffrage associations formally reunified as the NAWSA in 1890, it fully accepted the Utah WSA into its affiliate groups. Utah women made important appearances at national meetings, including the World's Congress of Representative Women in May 1893, held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair. By the time Utah sought its final bid for statehood in 1895, the Church and its male and female leadership were poised and ready to

advocate for equal suffrage in the proposed state constitution. Utah's successful statehood bid made it one of only four states in the U.S. with woman suffrage prior to 1900, largely due to the individual and group actions of Mormon women themselves.

For Mormon women then and today, equal suffrage is particularly meaningful as it marks a symbolic statement for women's equal status with the men of their faith, even if that perceived equality was complicated by adherence to a patriarchal authority structure in the Church. As questions of the place of women in the Church have come under greater scrutiny in recent years, Mormon feminists often look to the Utah suffrage era as a model for their own female activism and the advancing of women's religious and political autonomy and equal citizenship. Mormon feminism's scope has expanded in recent years to include the voices of international women, who also find some inspiration from early Mormon feminists, not only to challenge aspects of political and religious patriarchy, but also to challenge the racism and colonial impulses of the white American church. And Mormons join other feminists of faith, from Catholics to Evangelicals to Muslims, who are working to uncover and dismantle their own racist structures and attitudes that have marginalized the real struggles of women of color within their religious circles. Mormonism is compatible with feminism, some say, because Mormon women have always been feminists. On the other hand, the story of woman suffrage is understood by more traditional Mormon women to show how progress for women directly resulted from the Restoration itself, and that Mormon women have never been unequal. The organization of the Church and the Relief Society were the very sparks leading to decades of future progress for women in the world. Early Mormon feminists accepted this causation argument as well. Regarding the organization of the Relief Society, Kimball heard Joseph Smith "declare in 1842 that he was turning the key in behalf of woman . . . and that knowledge and intelligence would flow down from this time henceforth . . ." Kimball asserted that "the sure foundations of the suffrage cause were deeply and permanently laid on the 17th of March, 1842."[13] Recently, Relief President Jean Bingham made a similar argument, that "since that key was turned, educational, political, and economic opportunities for women have begun to gradually expand throughout the world."[14]

As a historian and a feminist, I squirm at this attempt to show direct causation between the beginnings of the Church and all social, political, and technological progress in the world since then. Correlation is not causation, even when certain events happen to occur simultaneously. Church members should be cautious to avoid taking "credit" for every achievement of humanity, especially because Church leaders have often declared direct opposition to movements like Civil Rights for ending racial segregation and discrimination in America, as well as the Equal Rights Amendment for women's constitutional equality. Similarly, Mormon feminists should be cautious to not claim an overstated inheritance from early suffragists. Remember, 19th century women had the support of male church leadership for women's suffrage rights, exactly because they were upholding and not challenging structural religious patriarchy. Today's feminists frequently critique the system of male privilege that keeps men in all positions of institutional authority and decision-making in the Church. Noted historian and Mormon feminist Laurel Ulrich has admitted that she never had a problem with male-only priesthood because "in a world which assumed male dominance, Christ's priesthood turned the notion of dominance upside down." But, she continued, "in a world which is beginning to recognize equality between men and women, an anxious clinging to the form of the priesthood can only violate its spirit."[15] Male leadership just for the sake of maleness no longer rings with modern feminist aims for true gender parity. Thus, in this 150th anniversary of Utah's women's suffrage, let us celebrate all of the moments of individual and group triumph as Mormon women exercised their strength of conscience, boldness of speech and coordinated public action for the goal of equal suffrage. But let us also honor with faith and hopeful action the many important changes for gender and racial equality that are still to come.

NOTES:

1. Annie Wells Cannon, *In Memorium: Emily Sophia Tanner Richards* (1929), p. 21-22.
2. Cannon, In Memorium, p. 22.
3. For a comprehensive look at Utah's women suffrage history and other women's activism, see www.betterdays2020.com.
4. "Minutes of a Ladies Mass Meeting" 6 January 1870, cited in Derr, Madsen, and Holbrook, eds., *The First Fifty Years: Key Documents in Latter-day Saint Women's History* (2016), p. 308.
5. Utah's neighbor, Wyoming Territory, enjoyed similar firsts by passing an equal suffrage law in December 1869, just under two months prior to Utah's law, although Utah women voted first.
6. See Andrea G. Radke-Moss, "Polygamy and Women's Rights: Nineteenth-Century Mormon Female Activism," in Foster and Bringhurst, eds., *The Persistence of Polygamy* (2013).
7. Minutes, 19 February 1870.; cited in *The First Fifty Years*, p. 346.
8. Bathsheba W. Smith, "Great Indignation Meeting," Jan. 13, 1870, cited in *The First Fifty Years*, p. 316.
9. George Q. Cannon, "Female Suffrage in Utah," Deseret Evening News, Feb. 8, 1870, cited in *The First Fifty Years*, p. 335.
10. Conference of the NAWSA, Salt Lake City, Utah, May 13-14 1895; *Woman's Exponent* May 15, 1895.
11. Kitterman and Clark, *Thinking Women: A Timeline of Suffrage in Utah* (2019).
12. Andrea G. Radke-Moss, "'Truly her soul rejoiced in helping the helpless" in Turley and Chapman, eds., *Women of Faith in the Latter Days*, Vol. III., 1846-1870 (2014), pp. 131-145.
13. Sarah M. Kimball, "Reply to 'A Man's Advice about Woman Suffrage," *Woman's Exponent*, Dec. 1, 1891, p. 81.
14. Jean B. Bingham, "United in Accomplishing God's Work," General Conference 5 April 2020.
15. Ulrich, "Pink Dialogue and Beyond," *Dialogue* Spring 2020, pg. 29.

Approaching Unity

ANDI PITCHER DAVIS

Bless the union between savior and soul
Blessed be the savior whose soul is union
of between and in between.

Bless the one who blesses,
and the one who taught her
to bless.

Bless the one who traipses through beauty
To arrive in despair.
She is our Eve, and mother
of death and life.

Bless be the garden fallow,
not blooming, not barren.
The fallow is the most blessed of all.

Fallow calls upon us — we who bless —
to call her back from above
Back to bounty.

In this, the fallow,
not the fallen
Is communion with
common saviors.

She is our Eve
between and in between
God,
the people.

From fallow, we descend,
Again approaching unity.

ARTIST STATEMENT

In the last few years my work has taken a critical view of my own cultural perception and the dualism of the self. I consider my work a dialogue between the contradictions that arise from the distance and the dislocation I sometimes feel as I divide my life in two countries. My search is for personal continuity as I pick and choose aspects of my gender and cultural identity and play with its associated ideas. I am inspired by the moments that we all share as humans despite our somatic and intangible walls and boundaries. I capture these glimpses into humanity with both serious reflection and delightful whims in search of the pieces to an indivisible whole.

"Dos Casas" | Elizabeth Sanchez
elizabethsanchezart.com | IG: elizabeth_sanchez_art

Political Movements and Heroes

In 1870 Utah became the second U.S. territory to remove sex as a restriction to the right to vote. Mormon women remained very engaged in the national battle for suffrage. Likewise, Susan B. Anthony showed interest in Utah politics, as seen in this letter published in *The Woman's Exponent* in 1899. Anthony refers to the fact that B. H. Roberts, an opponent of suffrage, was elected to the United States Congress (he was never seated due to his practice of polygamy). A lifetime later, a Mormon woman working on Capitol Hill was still unusual enough to merit a profile in the 1976 *Exponent II* special issue on politics. Miss Anthony would have been proud of Caroleen Silver's work avoiding "partisanshipism." Finally, blogger Emily Gilkey Palmer examines hero reductionism, a reflection on social conversations around the world today. As Mormon feminists commit to intersectionality, an examination of the complicated actions and beliefs of our own heroes, including Susan B. Anthony, is necessary. All three pieces have been edited for space and clarity.

ARTIST STATEMENT

America needs a Mama....and a spankin'!

This MAGA is not working.

The only "GREAT" we need to be doing is "Getting Ready Everybody, And Thrive Together."

You got it??

That's the ONLY G R E A T T we need to be working on.

MAMAmerica is tired y'all. Her children are divided and fighting. She has nursed and nurtured the children of the country and been called mammy. She has scrubbed floors in houses she couldn't live in and set dinner tables for meals she couldn't sit down for.

She has been severely abused, neglected and disrespected. But she rises. She not only survives but she thrives. She came to this land with nothing and she is still here. And she's here to stay.

MAMAmerica is tired ya'all.

So let's Get Ready Everybody, And Thrive Together.

That's the only G.R.E.A.T.T America needs right now.

"MAMAmerica" | Karyn Dudley
IG: @km_creative_expressions
karynmichelle.com

Miss Anthony's Letter

Woman's Exponent | January 1, 1899 | Vol. 27 No. 15

My Dear Mrs. Wells:

I have before me your good letters of Nov 2nd and 14th, also several others from women in Utah, all relative to the election of Mr. Roberts. The deed is done — the women of Utah, as well as the men, voted their party ticket regardless of the right action of its Congressional nominee on the woman suffrage question. Congress will not reject him because of his disloyalty to women's rights, and it is doubtful if it will on account of his family relations; but we shall see what we shall see!!

If his influence in Washington is against woman suffrage you must expose him right along, just hold him to woman suffrage.

Governor Wells' word was splendid; give him my kind regards, and also to each and all of the Wells family. They are made of good sterling stuff, and that is the kind of people this nation needs. The point of Mrs. A's letter was that the Utah Suffrage Association ought to publish an earnest protest against Mr. Roberts; that you surely can do. Mrs. S. tells of securing an expression from Mr. Roberts that he would not oppose suffrage. Both seem very earnest for the honor of the women of the State. I do hope all women, Mormon or Gentile, will banish sectarianism or partisanshipism and talk and work and vote only for good officials, regardless of church or party! There are good and bad men and women in all churches and all parties, and it is only the good that should get selected for official positions.

Your women must learn from this election the vital importance of their presence in the very first nominations, for after the nominations are made it is so very difficult to persuade voters to stand there for any save their own party nominees. But it will take time to teach women. Why, men have not learned the lesson with a hundred and more years of practice! Let us, then, be patient with women's mistakes at the first and second time of voting. What you need in Salt Lake is a local council of all the different societies and clubs, and then for the officers of the council to make the move for or against public measures or men, thus acting for all women of the city. Mormon or Gentile, Republican or Democratic, silver or gold — instead of as now, with one Party protesting and all the others silent.

Lovingly and loyally yours,
Susan B. Anthony
Dec. 5, 1989

Working on "The Hill"

KAY GAISFORD

Exponent II | June 1976 | Vol. 2 No. 4

When Caroleen Silver moved to Washington, D.C., six years ago, her job-hunting inquiries were usually greeted with the question, "How fast can you type?" Three jobs later, she is now a legislative assistant to New Mexico Senator Peter V. Domenici. After three years in that job, she finally receives a salary equal to that of her male counterparts. In the process, she has learned much about the politics of women's equality — and the politics of working in Congress.

[A job as an assistant to a New Jersey congressman] gave her the experience she needed to land a job with Senator Domenici when he arrived in the Senate in 1973. Caroleen was neither a Republican nor a New Mexican, but the Senator from New Mexico needed people with experience on The Hill, and within a week on the job, Caroleen had proved that her experience qualified her to be his legislative assistant.

But her salary was much below that of the men who served in similar roles. Caroleen's efforts to push for equal pay were hindered by the problem of being the only Democrat in the office, as well as the only woman. Other members of the staff resented the more liberal votes they felt she was influencing the Senator to make.

"But in reality," says Caroleen, "I worked very hard to keep my memos to the Senator totally neutral, giving both sides of an issue."

She advises Domenici about legislation in the fields of education, health, labor, welfare, banking, and housing. Doing her homework on both sides of a debate has paid off. "On one bill, the senator asked me to prepare a statement for the Congressional Record explaining his 'yes' vote. Then he turned around and voted 'no.' I had only thirty minutes to prepare a new statement, but it wasn't hard to do, because I had all the facts lined up on both sides of the question."

Of the 400-500 legislative assistants in the Senate, about sixty are women, with the number growing yearly. It was only in 1975 — after three years of working long hours and carrying a heavier legislative load than other legislative assistants in her office — that Caroleen achieved salary parity with the men on the staff.

Being a divorcee, Caroleen has faced several difficult adjustments. "Not only do you have to deal with your own loneliness, but also with the attitudes of others," she says. Being a single parent has been difficult. Caroleen takes

her role as a mother very seriously. Ten-year-old Scott has adjusted to his mother's absorption with her career, and Caroleen has appreciated the good friends who have helped her with Scott when she could not be there.

Success and recognition came slowly at first, but hard work and tenacity have paid off. Gradually she has built up the confidence in her own ability and her value to the senator which has enabled her to demand — and receive — the recognition and compensation that turn a job into a career.

The Founding Fathers: Heroes or Villains?

EMILY GILKEY PALMER
The Exponent Blog | July 4, 2020

I have seen [an online quiz] pop up all over my Facebook I recently read "T*he Founding Fathers – Heroes or Villains?*" by Tad Callister, posted by the *Deseret News*. It struck me as deeply problematic and ahistorical. It is problematic because he accuses people who today are critical of the founding fathers for being "hypocritical" and implies ingratitude for "heaven-sent messengers." Most of that criticism comes from Black people, People of Color, and their allies. His narrative puts on one side grateful people who see God's hand in the founding, and ungrateful hypocrites who want to destroy the legacy of God's chosen messengers. This is an unhelpful framework given the conversation that Church members need to be having about race right now.

The title of the article and the first sentence contextualizes this article properly: it sets up an ahistorical and unnecessarily divisive non-conflict. Humanity is not divided into "heroes" and "villains" and no self-respecting historian would ever bother with trying to establish whether a person fell into one category or the other. The question suggests that our only two options are to erect a statue to someone or to spit on their grave. We must worship or despise. There is no room for nuance, and anyone who offers a complication to a heroic narrative is by definition denigrating the hero.

He begins by quoting Ted Stewart, a federal judge: "There is just one problem with judging [the founding fathers] by today's standards and it is this: but for those imperfect founders and the sacrifices that they made and the instruments of government they created, there would be no current, enlightened standards of equality and justice by which to judge them."

This comment presupposes that the American Founding Fathers a) originated the ideas they supported relating to human rights and liberty and b) created the only democratic experiment in the world in which they grew. Both of these are incorrect. The American founders stood on the shoulders of giants, and they knew it. Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau elaborated social contract theory long before the colonists started getting restive. They, and not Jefferson, originally put forward the idea that humans are endowed with freedom and equality by nature, and that we use our free will to create a political entity along democratic principles that meets the needs of both the individual and the collective. It was John Locke who first said that all individuals are equal and born with "inalienable" natural rights. Locke noted that these rights included "life, liberty, and property." Locke's definition of property didn't only include the things we own, but also a right to personal well-being – or, as Jefferson put it, "pursuit of happiness." It was Locke who argued that the purpose of government was to secure and protect the inalienable rights of the people. Other founding principles of the United States were likewise derived from Enlightenment thought – for example, Voltaire was a vociferous advocate of separation of church and state and a fierce critic of tyranny and censorship. So the idea that without our sainted founding fathers we simply would not have these principles present in human minds is nonsense. They promulgated them. They produced one of several experiments on those principles. They merit recognition for their efforts. But they certainly didn't come up with the notion of a social contract or natural liberties on their own.

So what about the second part of the contention? Sure, the founding fathers didn't *think* of those ideas. But without them they would only be theory! Again, this is untrue. The French Revolution erupted shortly after the American Revolution and, despite the flattering imagination of many a patriot, the French Revolution owed very little to the United States for either inspiration or execution. Like the American Founding Fathers, the French derived their ideology largely from their own countrymen – the French philosophes. The Haitian Revolution, which followed almost immediately on the heels of the French, was the birth of a democracy that truly challenged the idea that "all men are created equal" meant "only white men, and we are keeping slavery." The Haitians freed themselves from slavery. The Haitians took the same ideology that inspired our Founding Fathers and, unlike Jefferson, immediately engaged with the questions of race and perpetual servitude.

Continuing with Tad Callister:

> "Do the critics believe these liberties came about by chance or that they were spawned by evil men? If so, how do they reconcile such a position with the unerring logic of the Savior: 'Ye shall know them by their fruits.'"

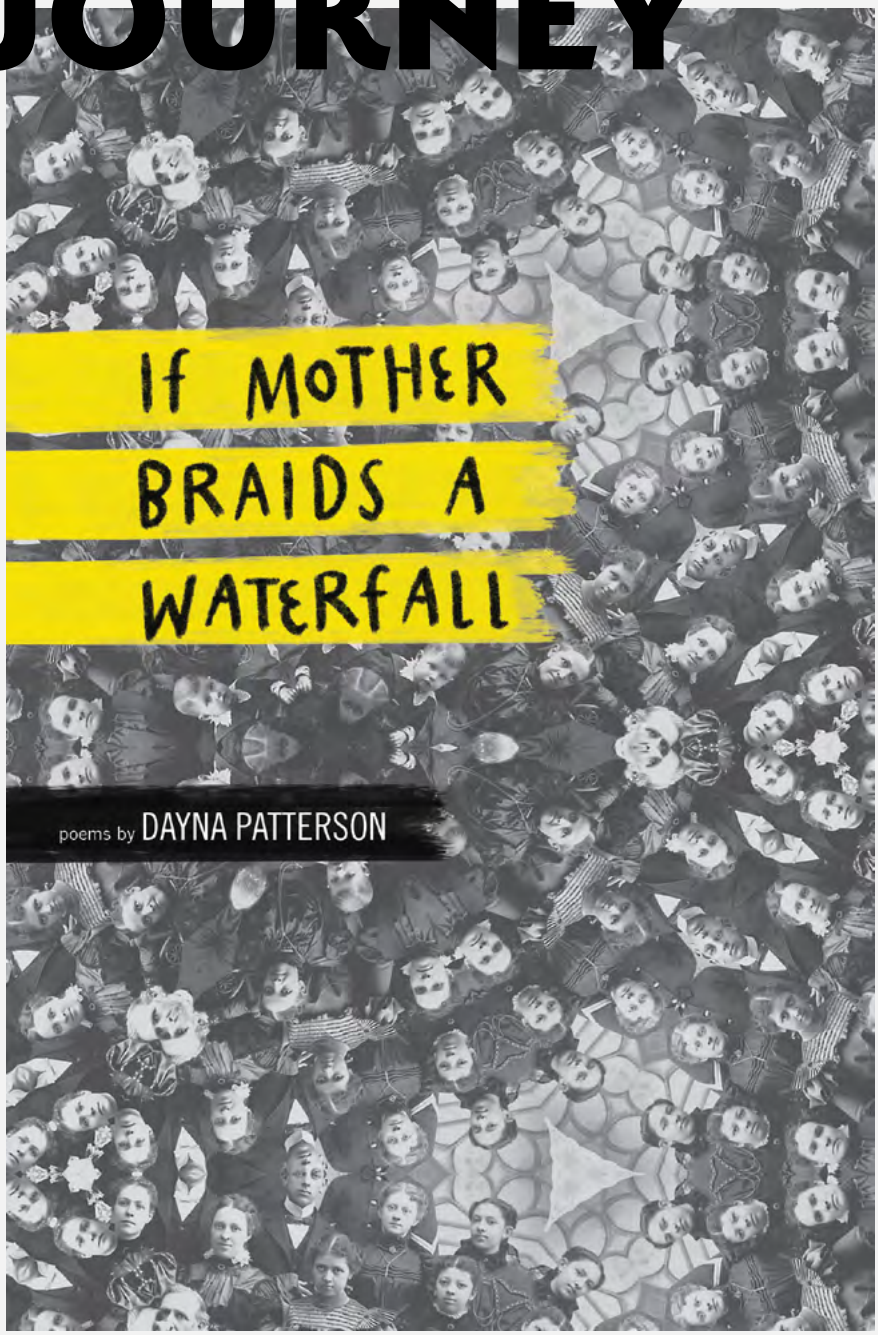
And so we return to the reductionist and absurd assertion that good ideas only come from angelic men, and that evil men produce only universally bad outcomes. Thus if something good happens, then the author of it must have been a hero.

Undoubtedly, we have much to be grateful for and much to acknowledge. We have civil liberties enshrined in our constitution. We have separation of powers. We have a system that allows for improvement and change. We have examples of men who, in many important ways, were inspiring. But if we know them by their fruits, then those fruits also include the 3/5 compromise, and the specification that the international slave trade had to continue until 1808. Did God inspire that part of the Constitution? The fruits were a government that systematically murdered and evicted Native peoples. The fruits were a government that denied civil rights to women. When Abigail Adams pleaded with her husband to "Remember the Ladies," she was specifically asking for relief from coverture – the legal fiction in which a married woman ceased to exist in the eyes of the law but instead became subsumed in her husband's identity, losing all rights to individual property. "All men would be tyrants if they could," she reminded him. His response? "I cannot but laugh." Perhaps if the goal is inculcating hero worship, examining the fruit on the tree is a bad plan.

Tad Callister's closing paragraph is particularly troubling because of his blithe disregard to the subtext of what he was saying:
"The Founding Fathers could have quietly retreated to the comfort and wealth of their plantations, law offices and businesses, but they put that all at risk for their children, fellow Americans and future generations — even us. To not be grateful for their sacrifices, for their willingness to literally put their lives, fortunes and reputations on the altar of sacrifice, would be ingratitude of the highest order. They were nothing less than heaven-sent messengers who gave us the greatest liberties ever enjoyed by any people or nation on earth. And as such we should honor and respect them, and their incredibly supporting and sacrificing spouses, as the heroes they indeed are."
They could have retreated to their plantations. Where hundreds of enslaved people made the "comfort and wealth" for them. They were very careful not to put that comfort and wealth at risk, by making sure that slavery continued. Should the descendants of slaves reflect with unqualified gratitude on that reality? The founders did not "put their . . . fortunes" on the altar of sacrifice. They were categorically unwilling to sacrifice their fortunes. They would not free their slaves, the single greatest concentration of wealth. The founders guaranteed that they would have complete control of their wives' property. Perhaps on an individual level, had they lost and been punished as traitors by Britain, they could have lost those fortunes. But they did all in their power to maintain white male supremacy, and they succeeded. If they were sent from heaven as messengers, then what does that say about God's opinion of Black people? Of women? Of Indigenous peoples?
My argument here is not that our founding fathers were evil or to suggest that their contributions are unimportant or unworthy of recognition. That reductionist position is what Callister suggests is the only alternative to hero-worship. But that is not the case. It is possible to reflect with gratitude on some aspects of a legacy, and admire some aspects of a person's history, without putting them (literally in this case) on a pedestal. Removing a statue doesn't automatically mean loathing every aspect of that person. It means acknowledging the complexity of the legacy, and finding better, more complete ways of telling the story.

POEMS OF A FAITH JOURNEY

NANCY ROSS



Whether we decide to stay in the LDS Church or not, the experience of wrestling with faith, family, community, and history is a nearly universal one in our Mormon feminist community. The last few years have seen an explosion of collections of poetry that describe the faith journeys of Mormon feminists, perhaps starting with Ashley Mae Hoiland's *One Hundred Birds Taught Me to Fly: The Art of Seeking God* (The Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship) in 2017 through to Carol Lynn Pearson's anticipated new collection, *Finding Mother God: The Missing Half of Heaven: Poems*, which will be published by Gibbs Smith later this year. These books tend to include themes of personal experience, seeking Heavenly Mother, and connecting the work of our religious and literary foremothers. My own book in this group, *Shades of Becoming: Poems of Faith Transition* (Amazon CreateSpace, 2019), edited with Kristin R. Shill, emphasizes the process of releasing old identities and claiming something new. Dayna Patterson's *If Mother Braids a Waterfall* (Signature Books, 2020) is no different in its themes, but offers a thoughtful poetic narrative that pushes deeper into spaces of discomfort and disconnection with the LDS Church while holding onto Mormon identity. It holds a wonderful range of memories, beliefs, and experiences in tension with each other in a way that few have articulated.

If Mother Braids a Waterfall is a collection of poems that includes illustrations using historical family photographs. It touches on themes of family history, polygamy, the author's mission, her mother's coming out, finding Heavenly Mother in nature, and leaving the LDS Church. Patterson prefaces the work with her family tree and dedicates the collection to "my mothers and foremothers." While

not articulated in the table of contents, the poems are divided into three sections. Textless pages with manipulated photographs mark the breaks between sections. Each section follows a similar arrangement, with poems speaking to identity, letters to foremothers, and memories of community holidays beginning each section.

The opening poem, titled "The Mormons are Coming," serves as a kind of guide to the whole book, introducing the majority of themes and imagery. It celebrates Mormon compassionate service while poking fun at the quirks of Mormon culture, reflects on the patriarchal and heteronormative nature of the LDS Church, and closes with a comment on service for service's sake. In this, Patterson invokes the imagery of funeral potatoes, cards from visiting teachers, garments, Wonder Bread in sacrament trays, and temple clothing. As she works her way through her own faith story, these and other objects become touchstones of experience that will be familiar to her Mormon readers.

The poems in the first section address themes of polygamy, and the unbalanced roles in relationships between men and women. After my first reading, the most memorable poem from this part was "Dear Grandpa" (p. 21), where the author returns her grandfather's unwanted cheek pinching and he learns to stop this behavior. The final poem of this section, "Apples," marks a transition away from the model offered by traditional Mormonism and invites the reader to partake of "Eve's calling card" (p. 34).

The second part begins with "Post-Mormons Are Leaving" (p. 37), which is both heartbreaking and my favorite in the book. Patterson evokes both Mormon history and my own painful journey with the lines "Post-Mormons are leaving in the night, trailing red / across a frozen river" (p. 39). She defends her fond childhood memories of heritage parades to a non-Mormon newcomer in "Pioneer Day" (p. 44) and questions the wisdom of trying to persuade Catholic women away from St. Mary while she herself was searching for the feminine divine ("Proselytizing by a Marian Shrine in Québec," p. 47). "Ring Tricks" contains the most compelling imagery for a change of belief, describing Mormon bodies "palimpsestuous" with the ability to rewrite our stories. "When I Beach" (p. 63) ends the section with a description of the pleasure and immanence of sex contrasted with a lack of intimacy with God.

The final section opens with "Former Mormons Catechize Their Kids" (p. 67) and is a description of the many ways former Mormon parents try to instill in their children a sense of religious plurality, telling diverse stories of gods, goddesses, and creations. The poems in this section tell haunting stories of small-town celebrations of colonization ("Founder's Day," p. 77); Patterson's mother coming out while Patterson remained in her Mormon certainty, her "hibernacle" ("Dear Mom," p. 81); and her grandfather running over her toddler mother with his car ("The Mercy of Mud," p. 85). She frames the story of her many-greats grandmother Ellen as one of heroism ("Dear Ellen, 2018," p. 91) and claims former Mormon poet May Swenson as her foremother ("Dear May," p. 89). This section ends with "If Mother Braids a Waterfall," where Patterson contemplates the forgotten mystery of communing with Heavenly Mother. The final poem, separated from the final part, declares itself in the title "Still Mormon" (p. 107), where the imagery for her lingering identity is compared with the smell of skunk spray and a tapped-out sugar maple tree.

The collection achieves many goals. The sense of the distant and recent pasts being in dialogue with the author's voice in the present is one of the great strengths of the poems. Many of these exchanges are facilitated through letters to family members and others, both dead and alive. She seeks for Heavenly Mother without locating Her in a tidy human body. Instead, the longing is for connection, typically expressed through encounters with the natural world. It discusses her journey through Mormon identity, beginning with the first poem ("The Mormons Are Coming") and still claimed in the final poem ("Still Mormon"). Again,

Patterson holds together her complicated relationship with Mormonism and the LDS Church. This willingness to engage in the complex work of picking and choosing, claiming and rejecting, and leaving while staying Mormon sets the book apart from others in its genre. Patterson's writing is full of grief, empathy, curiosity, and insight into her experiences and those of her mothers and foremothers. "Post-Mormons walk barefoot over the wreckage of faith / crisis, exchange bleeding digits for free time" ("Post Mormons are Leaving," p. 39). As someone who is interested in the sociology, ministry, and lived experiences of people who are going through faith transitions, I want to emphasize that this volume has much to offer in a first reading, but also much to chew on and revisit.

Tongan Woman

The Artist Activist

An Interview with **KALANI TONGA**

Tell me about the many ways you're engaged in your communities.

I work with PIK2AR (Pacific Island Knowledge 2 Action Resources), a nonprofit organization geared toward empowering disadvantaged members of the greater Salt Lake City community by providing resources that help them help themselves. I facilitate peer-to-peer women's support groups, run a Pacific Islander writing group that focuses on issues affecting the PI community, host the PEAU Book Club where we read the works of Pacific Islander authors, and I am actively engaged in planning and executing the National Pacific Islander Violence Prevention Conference each year. Additionally, I have worked as a substitute teacher and parent volunteer at Pacific Heritage Academy, a local charter school that incorporates the values and folk knowledge of the Pacific Islands into the curriculum and school culture, and I was recently hired as the PHA art teacher for the 2020-2021 school year.

Do you consider yourself an activist? If so, how did you get to the point of using that term comfortably to describe yourself?

I do consider myself an activist because I work to make a difference in my community. Through my work with PIK2AR, I am able to help members of my community learn about and address a variety of issues, like domestic and intimate partner violence, homelessness, and food insecurity. I think activism is really just a willingness to invest your time, resources, and privilege into bettering your community, and I work hard to do this. As far as getting comfortable with using "activist" to describe my work, I guess I try to remember that activism is not just limited to those who commit their entire lives to a cause. Activism can be as small as intentionally speaking to your immediate circle of friends and family

about important issues to try to make the world a healthier place, or as big as planning a national rally or lobbying for change on Capitol Hill. My personal belief is that anyone who works to improve the condition of the world we live in is worthy of the "activist" title.

How does your activism intersect with your art?

I actually became an artist because of my activism work. In January of 2019, PIK2AR partnered with Art Access, a nonprofit organization committed to making art accessible to underserved communities, and we developed a weekly open art studio night. As one of the facilitators for the program, I attended open studio and began painting just for fun during this time. In April, we hosted the National Pacific Islander Violence Prevention Conference, and those of us who had been attending open art studio nights were asked to bring a piece of artwork that we had worked on to auction for the cause. I brought one of my paintings, and was very pleasantly surprised to find that many people were really excited about my work and wanted to purchase it. This initial excitement launched a very unexpected side hustle, and I am now able to help provide for my family by selling my art. Additionally, I continue to produce pieces for various nonprofit auctions, such as the Heels to Heal walk and dinner for sexual abuse victims and the National Pacific Islander Violence Prevention Conference.

Tell us about how your art has been featured in unusual places, like your local Walmart. How did that happen?

I honestly have just thrown my artwork out into the Great Abyss and let the Universe take it or leave it. On a whim, I entered a couple of pieces of my artwork in a community mural competition that Walmart hosted, and one of my pieces was chosen to represent my community at the Millcreek location. Similarly, I was invited — again, pretty much on a whim — to exhibit my work at the Intermountain Layton Hospital when a curator mentioned they were looking to fill a vacated slot in their exhibition calendar and I happened to be in the right place at the right time. And, because of the global pandemic, my work has been showing for several months longer than our original agreement due to an inability to retrieve it from the hospital! Some might view this negatively since I cannot encourage people to go see and purchase my artwork from the hospital right now, but I choose to hope that those who do have to go into the hospital will feel slivers of happiness because my bright paintings radiate joy and love.

How does your work as an author and editor intersect with activism?

Along with the brilliant minds of Bryndis Roberts, Jennifer Gonzalez, Gina Colvin, and Natasha Smith, I co-founded a blog called FeMWOC, or Feminist Mormon Women of Color, that focused on social issues that specifically affect women of color. Although the blog is currently dormant, I am proud of the work we put into elevating the voices of women of color, and our work is still frequently referenced when topics we covered come up. I also co-edited a book of poetry with Joanna Brooks called *We Hold Your Name: Mormon Women Bless Mormons Facing Exile*, and this book was important to my activism because it allowed me to provide a space for my community to grieve and heal from the dangerous practice of excommunication in Mormonism.

Hope Rising

With all kinds of constraints on your time, how do you make the decision to be involved? In other words, what kind of issue, cause, organization, and/or moment prompts you to raise your hand?

I feel like the more invested I become in moving the work of social justice forward, the easier it has become to narrow my focus and concentrate on the issues that I feel called to pursue. When deciding whether or not to step forward and accept a role, I try to ask myself several questions:

A. Am I best suited for this role, or is there someone else whose voice I can elevate who is closer to the issue than me? In other words, is this a job that I should be doing, or is my job to help create space at the table for someone who doesn't currently have a seat there?

B. How does this role affect the responsibilities I currently hold? Will I be able to adequately fill this role and maintain my current responsibilities, or will this role detract from my ability to fulfill my current commitments?

C. Will my participation make the world a safer, kinder place for my children? My family is my top priority, and my activism is a natural outgrowth of my love for my kids and for kids who look like them and have similar life experiences. My focus lies in making the world work just a little better for those who maybe haven't had the privilege of a particularly easy, safe life.

What do you love about the work that you do?

I love feeling like I make a difference. I love the opportunity to be creative and I find joy in seeing that my work makes others feel happier about themselves and about the community around us.

What do you struggle with about the work that you do?

I often feel the weight of the sheer volume of work left to be done. It's easy to lose hope when you are constantly confronted with some of the worst aspects of human behavior. I've facilitated groups where young women discuss being raped by their own father or being ostracized by their family for speaking out against their abusers, and it is such a heavy, heartbreaking load to share. However, each person helped is worth the struggle.

If you were giving advice to women interested in becoming engaged in their communities but not knowing where to begin or not feeling brave enough to begin, what would you say?

I think the best advice I can give is to just start somewhere and see where it takes you. I tend to lean toward being a perfectionist, and one of the ways that I overcame my fear of failure in the art world was to decide early on that there is no such thing as a mistake when it comes to my art. I have felt very in tune with my ancestors as I have embraced my artistic talent, and I decided right from the beginning that if I made what I might be tempted to view as a mistake, that maybe the change in direction was, instead, my ancestors communicating to me that there is a better or a different way to learn my craft than the one I thought I was going to use. This has been helpful across many facets of my life, and the ability to look at a situation that seems to be headed in an unexpected direction and see it merely as a change of direction and not a failure has helped me to try new things and be OK with ending up in a completely different place than maybe I thought I would be. So, if you are interested in engaging with your community, but nervous about where to start, I would encourage you to just try something out, and to let go of expectations that might lead you to believe you've failed when really you've just been redirected.

Reluctantly Home

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We welcome personal essays, articles, poetry, fiction and book reviews for consideration. Please email submissions to exponentiieditor@gmail.com or mail them to *Exponent II*, 219 South Louis Street, Mount Prospect, IL 60056. Please include your name and contact information. Submissions received by mail will not be returned.

We are always looking for artwork and photography to accompany our writing. Please send art submissions to exponentiiart@gmail.com. If you are interested in illustrating articles, please contact us for specific assignments.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Thank you to Gifty Annan-Mensah, Karyn Dudley, Ginger Dall Egbert, Crystal Powell, Elizabeth Sanchez, Sarah Richards Samuelson, Kalani Tonga, Marlena Wilding and Kwani Winder for their artwork in this issue.

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WRITING CONTEST

SUBMIT YOUR WRITING FOR THE WINTER 2021 ISSUE OF *EXPONENT II*

Dear Creative Reader,

In this time of distance, when travel and face to face conversations are limited, we invite you to write a letter. A letter that captures your mind and heart and shares with another person over time and space. It can be a letter you want to write, a letter you should have written, a letter a character might write a story we can only know through their written conversation. It can be any topic, any writer or recipient, the only guideline is that the letter writing form — to someone, from someone, in a one-sided, direct address. It can be one letter or an exchange of letters. It can be any literary form — poetry, fiction, narrative, essay, song — as long as it is in a letter format.

Need inspiration? Think about:

- Martin Luther King's Letter from Birmingham Jail
- Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis
- Paul's epistles
- From the musical Hamilton – "Dear Theodosia"
- Epistolary novels such The Color Purple and Dracula
- Letter to your future/past self
- Letter to the Editor
- The love letters of Abelard and Héloïse
- Captain Moroni and Pahoran

Letters should be 700–2,400 words and in Google Doc or Word form. They can be sent to exponentiieditor@gmail.com. Authors should identify with the mission of Exponent II. The deadline for submissions is October 1, 2020.

The winner of the contest will receive a one week's stay at Anam Cara, a writer's retreat in Ireland. This prize will be available when the recipient is able to use it through 2022. Our sincere thanks go to Sue Booth-Forbes, former *Exponent II* editor, for making this award available.

We also have a special invitation for art for this issue. We would love for any of you with a creative spirit and some craft supplies to make a postcard and submit it to us to include in this issue. We welcome collage, drawing, or any other medium you want, as long as the image is 4 x 6 inches and could be sent in the mail. We hope that professional and casual artists alike will send us your postcard art. Postcard art submissions should be sent to exponentiiart@gmail.com.

We so look forward to reading your submissions and hope you are doing well,

All the best,
Exponent Editors

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